



# OUR PROBLEMS

M. N. ROY

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a collection of articles written weekly over a whole year from April 1937. Though they were written as separate articles, they deal with interconnected problems. Therefore, this book is not a collection of essays written at random. There is a central theme, which is set forth in the first chapter.

This book can be regarded as a chapter in the history of our struggle for freedom. The chapter is a critical record of the events of a fateful year. The acceptance of office by the Congress is the central event of the period. The decision to accept office was made by the All-India Congress Committee in March, 1937. This book records the development which was determined by that decision. The decision itself was the result of a long controversy, the cardinal points of which are also recorded in this book. The acceptance of office was opposed by a considerable number of Congressmen headed by some of our most popular leaders. From the very beginning, I held a different opinion. I did not believe that any positive good would come out of the policy I supported. As a matter of fact, I supported acceptance of office from a point of view entirely different from that of those who shouldered the responsibility of putting the new policy into practice. Their purpose has become evident within the short period of one year.

The tactics of non-co-operation and civil disobedience having exhausted their possibilities, and having regard for the fact that the Congress was not yet so reorganised as to lead a higher form of mass movement with more effective revolutionary tactics, the anti-imperialist movement had to pass through a period of transition. The choice was not between a direct conflict when we were not prepared for it, and relapse into constitutionalism. There was a third alternative. It was to disorganise the imperialist State from within and thereby create conditions for an eventual mass attack from outside. The 'acceptance of office by Congressmen could serve that purpose. Therefore I supported the policy of acceptance.

Was I wrong? Those who opposed acceptance were afraid that the new policy would degenerate into reformism and mislead the Congress to deviate from the stormy path of revolutionary struggle to the backwaters of constitutionalism. I know that the danger was there. Since it was there, it had to be faced. The Congress could not deviate from the path of revolutionary struggle unless it contained in its ranks people eager to do so. So long as such people would be there, and remain undetected by virtue of demagoguery and thanks to the prevailing spirit of hero-worship, there was no guarantee against the danger. To anticipate the danger was to admit that such people were there. Therefore, the proper thing for those who were

erger to protect the Congress against that danger, would be to help the Congress rid itself of those dangerous elements. I supported the policy of office acceptance with that purpose.

But I assumed honesty on the part of those who advocated the policy of acceptance of office as one of the means for combatting the new Constitution. Given that honesty, Congressmen could accept office with a revolutionary purpose. Immediately after it was decided to accept office, I pointed out how that could be done. But from the very beginning, our leaders refused to utilise office for the purpose of disorganising the imperialist state. Consequently, it became evident that the tendency to deviate from the path of revolutionary struggle was shared by not a few of our leaders. In course of time, it became more and more pronounced, causing a searhing of heart among the more critical and politically advanced members of the rank and file. This experience had to be made before the Congress could undergo the process of differentiation which is necessary for its becoming stronger—the determined consciously revolutionary leader of the Indian people in the struggle for national democratic freedom.

Public memory is short, particularly in a country where public life is dominated by blind faith and political backwardness. Very few realise that the policy pursued to day by our leaders runs counter to the resolutions adopted only the other day, not to mention the political

program and revolutionary principles of the Congress. Therefore, a critical record of an eventful year is bound to contribute to the political education of the rank and file. A warning was sounded whenever there was the least sign of any deviation. At the time it was not heeded by many. Later on, the predicted happened. Then it was too late, and was accepted as inevitable. But it was not necessary to be so fatalistic. At every critical moment, an alternative course of action was suggested. Blind faith in the infallibility of the leaders in power, and distrust for innovations kept the political atmosphere in a state of immobility. But lessons must be learned from experience. They can never be lost. It is hoped that the glimpse into the past afforded by this book will help all the sincere fighters for national freedom to learn valuable lessons from bitter experience. For one thing, the radicals should learn that, had they adopted a more realistic attitude when they could not defeat the policy of accepting office, the dangerous process of reformist degeneration and constitutionalist deviation could not go so far as it is happening to-day. By joint effort, the radicals could have amended the resolution to accept office as not to give free hand to the parliamentarians. Had that been done, office-acceptances would have served at least partially the revolutionary purpose of mobilising the masses for an early attack upon Imperialism.

But no use crying over spilled milk. My only anxiety is that similar mistakes should be avoided in future. The danger is there. The day is not far off when the Federation will be imposed on us. But no action has as yet been planned to implement the resolution to combat it. I dare say that there are many in the higher circles of the Congress who would combat the Federal scheme exactly in the same way as they are "wrecking" the Provincial Autonomy. That danger should be palpable to all the radicals. But what are they doing? Most of them are doing nothing more than the right-wing leaders, namely, to declare the determination to combat the Federal scheme and warn Imperialism against some unknown terrible consequence if it would entertain the illusion of succeeding in its sinister purpose. If we do no more than that, we shall succeed in preventing the imposition of the Federal Scheme just as we did in defeating those who wanted to accept office.

A realistic practical plan of action is needed. That has been suggested time and again ever since to combat the Federation became our principal slogan. They are recorded in the last chapters of this book. It will be published sufficiently ahead of time. I hope the suggestions will secure the support of all the radical elements so that a more effective fight can be put up this time than in the case of the Provincial Autonomy. The attention of the reader is drawn particularly to



the Appendices, in which the urgently needed plan of action is clearly set forth. It has been before the country ever since the beginning of the year.

In conclusion, it must be said that the ideas expounded and suggestions made, though largely formulated by me are the results of collective thought and action. While deploring the fact that they were not easily acceptable to the movement as a whole, I am pleased to declare that, in course of the year, a growing number of active political workers have been realising the real nature of our problems and finding the proper approach to them. Their cooperation has helped me very much not only to suggest an alternative plan of dynamic action, but to train up a sufficiently large band of workers to execute it. It is a plan of action for the Congress. Those who are endeavouring to put it into practice, are loyal Congressmen, who are convinced that the Congress, being the creation of the masses of the Indian people, is the most suitable instrument in their struggle for freedom.

The chapters 16 to 21, 37 and 39 are written by V B Karnik. Chapter 42 is the substance of a speech at the Subjects Committee of the Haripara Congress.

June 1st, 1938.

M N Roy

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The publication of the book has been delayed.

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# OUR PROBLEMS

## CHAPTER I

### NATIONAL FREEDOM.

“ ..The great poverty and misery of the Indian people are not only due to foreign exploitation, but also to the economic structure of (Indian) society which the alien rulers support so that their exploitation may continue. In order, therefore, to remove this poverty and misery and to ameliorate the conditions of the Indian masses, it is essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic structure of society, and to remove the gross inequalities.....” These words, quoted from a resolution adopted by the AICC in 1929, set forth the fundamental principle of the program of the movement for national freedom. Political independence is not the end, it is the means to an end which is radical transformation of the Indian society. The required change in the social structure of our country will be brought about primarily through

the transfer of the ownership of land to the cultivator. Not only the welfare of the peasantry, but the economic progress and prosperity of the nation as a whole is ultimately conditional upon that readjustment of the relation of those connected with the basic industry of the country. In our national economy, land is still the main means of production. Productivity of labour performed in the agricultural industry, is therefore, the source of national wealth. It is limited by the form of the ownership of the means of production. The established system of the relation of property in land on the one hand, restricts the productivity of agriculture, and, on the other, deprives the cultivator of the major portion of the fruits of his labour. Consequently, the great bulk of the population is kept on such a low standard of living as sets a rigid limit to the expansion of trade and manufacturing industries. Abolition of the non productive ownership of land is the fundamental feature of the type of social transformation historically known as Democratic Revolution. The political form of that revolution is the conquest of state power by the people, replacement of an autocratic government, foreign or native, by a representative government, by a government of the people, by the people. India is in the throes of such a revolution. The movement for national freedom develops upon the background of the historic necessity of a social revolution. Success of the anti imperialist struggle, attainment of the coveted

goal of national freedom, is conditional upon the realisation of the profound social significance of the mighty awakening of the masses which characterises the political situation of the country to-day.

The solution of the economic problems confronting us to day is to be found neither in the utopia of revivalism nor in the dream of developing modern industry on the basis of the capitalist mode of production. The solution lies in the productive employment of social labour, which is the only source of national income. Productivity of labour performed in handicraft industry is very low. A nation can not prosper when its labour-power is largely wasted. National prosperity based upon handicraft production, means low standard of living for the masses; and when the consuming capacity of the masses is limited by the very form of national economy, there is little room for its expansion. Economic revivalism if ever realised, would lead us into a vicious circle. That is not the way to the goal visualised in the A.I.C.C. resolution quoted above.

In addition to the pauperisation of the peasantry, mass unemployment is another obstacle to the economic progress of India. In order to absorb an appreciable portion of the unemployed labour within a short time, modern industry must expand rapidly. This is not possible within the limits of the capitalist mode of production. Modern industrial plants alone do not guarantee employment and therefore also not national

wealth. The purpose of production is the decisive factor. Capitalists do not produce unless these can be sold at a profit. Profit depends upon the extent of demand. This impetus is lacking in India. The low consuming capacity of the Indian masses sets a limit to production for profit, and, consequently, to the development of modern industry on the basis of the capitalist mode of production.

To remove these and allied obstacles to economic progress is the task of the democratic revolution. To begin with the peasantry must be relieved of the burdens which keep them in a state of economic bankruptcy. The accomplishment of this basic task will increase the purchasing power of the great bulk of the population. The essential condition for rapid development of modern industry will be created. Larger and larger number of people will be absorbed in the process of production. More labour performed with higher degree of productivity, will increase the volume of new wealth created. Transfer of the ownership of land from a parasitic minority to the cultivator will place the nation on the high road to progress and prosperity. National freedom means freedom to accomplish that task. Political change necessary for the purpose must be of such a nature as will empower the people to carry through this historically overdue social transformation.

India stands on the verge of a great social revolution, but Socialism is still a distant ideal. The impending

revolution will not abolish private property. Its task is to transfer the ownership of the main means of production from one class to another. That is not socialism, which means common ownership of the means of production. Rapid industrialisation cannot be accomplished by orthodox capitalist methods under the given conditions of India. On the other hand, Socialist economy cannot be established before the process of industrialisation has been accomplished. The only generally beneficial line of economic development open to India is to carry out an agrarian revolution, and build up modern industry under the control of a really democratic state.

Those who stand for national freedom with the purpose of ameliorating the conditions of the masses must fight for the realisation of the following programme ; (I) Establishment of genuine democratic state, a government of the people, by the people, *not for the sake of the people*. Introduction of this principle destroys democracy. It deprives the people of effective political power which is usurped by minority. What is left to the people is mere legal fiction. In a genuine democratic state sovereign right must always remain with the people, to be directly exercised, in legislation as well as in execution, in raising taxes as well as in suspending them. There must be no delegation of power. The state must be a pyramidal structure of representative bodies performing legislative as well as executive



functions. Only in that way can the government be really representative of, and responsible to the people. (2) Removal of all obstacles to national prosperity, which can result only from rapid growth of modern mechanised industry (3) Introduction of measures which will guarantee the cultivator of land inalienable possession of the entire product of his labour minus a specified contribution to the national exchequer (4) Abolition of all privileges and institutions which militate against the establishment of democratic freedom and constitute unnecessary burden on national economy and therefore are antagonistic to general welfare (5) Adoption of measures calculated to transform hoarded wealth into productive capital, and to guarantee distribution of newly created wealth so as to expand production and thus to quicken national prosperity

The object of our struggle against imperialism is not merely political freedom. India must be politically free, otherwise her social structure cannot undergo a historically necessary process of readjustment. National freedom is the means to the end of social reconstruction.

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## CHAPTER II

### A PLAN OF ACTION.

The crisis precipitated by imperialist intransigence has been tided over by setting up interim ministries in the provinces where the Congress controls the majority. But in reality, the crisis has not been overcome. It has become permanent. Stable government has become impossible in those provinces. This state of things seems to give satisfaction to many a Congressman. They say that we have carried through the plan of wrecking the constitution. That is a cheap satisfaction. The fact is that, in spite of everything, the hated charter of slavery has been put into force. The autocratic power of the governors is "constitutional." The Constitution invests them with the power to set up puppet ministers whenever they may not be able to control the situation otherwise. The constitution will be really wrecked only when administration of the country will be impossible except by those elected by the majority of the people. Until then there must be a ceaseless struggle with the object of breaking down all resistance to the people's will to freedom.

It is a waste of time to argue that the governors have acted autocratically by refusing to give the

assurance demanded by the majority party. We need not be on the defensive. We need not justify the refusal to accept office on the ground of this or that constitutional technicality. We should stand on the firm ground that we refuse to accept responsibility without the requisite power. The refusal of the governors to give the assurance that he would not interfere with the "constitutional activities" of his ministers, clearly means that these have no power under the new constitution. To ask for any assurance was an ill-conceived tactical move. It has given them opportunity to flout the spokesmen of the majority of the electorate, and offer a plausible explanation for that autocratic act. If the purpose of the move was to precipitate a dead-lock, that could be more honourably achieved otherwise, either by simply declining to accept office, or by accepting office and then pressing for legislations required to implement the Congress election manifesto. In the latter case the governors could not have any plausible pretext for flouting the will of the majority, and the dead-lock could be brought about at our convenience, by our initiative, whenever we were prepared to utilize it as the lever of developing a mass struggle for the capture of power by the people. The desired legislations would be necessarily disagreeable to the vested interest, and the governors would be compelled to disallow or veto them. Congress ministers could resign at such a

juncture on the ground that they are not allowed to fulfil their promise to the electorate, and demand a re-election for securing the verdict of the electorate. They could not then be accused of shirking the responsibility of office. The tactical mistake created a situation in which the governors could flout the verdict of the majority of the electorate created by the constitution on the authority of the constitution itself. What is still worse is that the elected majority may be deprived of any constitutional locus standi for six months. What are we to do in this situation? That is the question of the moment. The answer is obvious. The will of the majority must be enforced. The people must be led to assert the right of self-determination.

It is with the purpose of testing the strength of popular opposition that imperialism has chosen to challenge the Congress directly upon its sweeping victory at the polls. The challenge must be taken up boldly. Temporising attitude on our part is bound to be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Any search for a formula of reconciliation must be deprecated. That would only encourage intransigence on the part of our rulers. Instead of wasting time in argumentations about constitutional procedure, and parliamentary manoeuvrings, we should act quickly and with determination. In the given situation there cannot be much difference of opinion about the nature of the action to be undertaken. Victory at the last

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elections has placed the Congress in a favourable strategic position. The parliamentary crisis can become the impetus for a mass struggle for the capture of power by the people and the conquest of democratic freedom.

The plan of the Government seems to be to put refractory legislatures in cold storage. Should the majority party take the insult lying down? Should the elected representatives of the people patiently wait till the proud satraps will find it convenient to permit them to meet in order to perform their function. If we do not take the initiative, the field will be left free for the government and its henchmen to carry on disruptive propaganda against the Congress. Eventually, there must be a re-election in the provinces where the opposition is in the majority. The interim ministries shall have to resign as soon as the Legislature will meet. The government does not want a re-election immediately, because that will surely mean a greater victory for the Congress. If we patiently wait till we are given the opportunity to run out the minority ministries, we shall have to fight the new election in an atmosphere of depression and even distrust fomented by official propaganda. Those who cast their votes for the Congress are expecting something in return. They do not understand all these constitutional argumentations. Should there be a period of parliamentary dead lock, they would simply see that

Congressmen elected by them are not doing anything by way of fulfilling the promises made during the election campaign. Supporters of the government will seek to shake popular confidence in the Congress by asking the question: why did not Congressmen take over the administration of the country when it was offered to them? Only definite action on our part can give a convincing answer to this vexatious question, and thus retain the confidence of the people as guarantee for a great victory in the new election to be fought before long. We must demonstrate that legislators elected on the Congress ticket could not do anything concrete for the welfare of the masses, because they were prevented from doing so. In other words, we must raise the fundamental issue of power, and bring the masses up against it through their own experience.

With that purpose, we must demand immediate convocation of the Legislative Assemblies. If the demand is not complied with within a specified time, the majority party should issue invitation to all the opposition groups to meet with the object of discharging their obligation to the electorate. That will be a demonstration to the effect that the Legislative Assemblies derive their authority not from an Act of the British Parliament, but from the electorate. That will be a practical assertion of the democratic principle of popular sovereignty. The majority of elected



representatives of the people will then constitute themselves as a body constitutionally and morally competent to condemn the autocratic behaviour of foreign governors, demand the resignation of the puppet ministries, and pass a resolution advocating the legislative measures for promoting the welfare of the masses of the people. Should the governors still resist the will of the majority, the only honourable course left to the opposition majority will be to resign en bloc, and launch a mass campaign with the demand for immediate general election. The alternative course would be to defy the autocratic power of the governors, and declare itself as the legitimate custodian of popular sovereignty. But conditions for that final bid for power, for that conclusive assertion of the democratic right of self-determination, are still to be created. They will be gradually brought about in course of the aggressively developing mass struggle against imperialism which will force a series of recurring elections.

In order to ensure greater success in the new election, the campaign should be conducted with concrete demands reflecting the interests of the majority of the electorate. Congress candidates should advocate a definite programme of legislation calculated to redress the most burning grievances of the oppressed and exploited majority of the nation. They should tell the electorate that they want to promote popular welfare, but they were not allowed to do so, therefore

they are seeking a new mandate from the electorate. They will tell the electorate that they could not implement their promise because the governors had refused to convene the Legislative Assemblies elected by the enfranchised section of the people. They will tell that they have resigned their seats because they were not permitted to perform their function, as representatives of popular will. Such a campaign, launched without delay, will frustrate the plan of the government to have the inevitable re-election in an atmosphere of depression which would result from a period of political inactivity. We shall be on the offensive. We shall regain the initiative lost owing to the tactical blunder of asking the governors for an assurance. Returned in a greater majority, Congressmen will simply accept office and go straight ahead carrying out the programme of legislation formulated during the election campaign. Should the governors obstruct, as they are most likely to do, the country will be in the throes of another constitutional crisis, this time not sprung on us unawares, but brought about deliberately by the popular party in pursuance of a positive plan of action. In the crisis, the stratagem of setting up interim ministries will not work. Legislatures must be forthwith dissolved, and Congress will fight the ensuing election with no handicap whatsoever. Congressmen had assumed the responsibility of administering the country, but had to lay it

down because they would not betray the electorate which had returned them with a majority in the legislature. The crucial issue of power will be on the order of the day. The irreconcilable antagonism between popular welfare and vested interests will stand out in the clearest relief. By their own experience the masses will realize that the problems of their daily life are intimately connected with the general problem of the conquest of power. That realization will raise them to the level of political consciousness requisite for a successful struggle for the capture of power, and the establishment of a government of the people, by the people.

About 80 percent of the electorate created by the new constitution belong to the oppressed and exploited classes. In course of time the Congress is bound to secure the vote of this overwhelming majority. When that is achieved by boldly advocating agrarian revolution and other measures calculated to promote the welfare of the masses, administration of the country will be impossible except with the consent of the party of the people. And the consent will have to be expressed in the form of a constitution framed by an assembly elected for the purpose by the people as a whole. The first step towards the establishment of a *democratic state* will be a joint meeting of the popular majorities of all the provincial legislatures held with the purpose of issuing the call for the election of the Constituent Assembly. No power

on earth can withstand such a demonstration of popular will to freedom. The rise of the popular organ for the capture of power and its ability to overcome all possible resistance will be guaranteed by the organization of the Congress as a country-wide net-work of democratically elected local committees functioning as the units of a new state.

That is the only road to freedom. We must resolutely travel that road, if we are ever to realize the generally cherished ideal of political emancipation and social reconstruction of our country. The present constitutional crisis presents us with the opportunity to begin that triumphal march. Shall we still lack the courage to do so?

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## CHAPTER III

### A REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE.

The U P Congress Committee has indicated the only line of action that the Congress can honourably follow under the given circumstances. The resolution passed by its Executive Council contains a courageous lead. We earnestly hope that it can be uniformly adopted throughout the country.

The fundamental idea of the resolution is, "that since the legislatures derive their authority from the electorates they are not only constitutionally competent but morally bound to act in defiance of the Governors when these dare disregard the verdict of the majority." That obviously is a very dynamic idea which logically leads to the conclusion that should the governors disregard the demand for immediate convocation of the Legislative Assemblies, responsible members thereof should not abdicate their authority that they should gather in order to perform their legitimate function to discharge their responsibility in a way feasible under the given relation of forces. One point must be made clear. The suggested meeting is not meant to be a mere conference of members of Legislative Assemblies, but a session of the Legislature competent to perform

its constitutional function. A meeting like that would be a challenge to the autocratic power of the governor, a challenge thrown down by the majority of the electorate.

The idea has not yet received the sanction of the Working Committee. Consequently no action can as yet be undertaken in compliance with it. But the idea should be properly understood. It opens before us a revolutionary perspective which excludes all possibilities of any compromise within the frame-work of the Government of India Act of 1935.

- To reject this new device of imperialist domination is the avowed policy of the Congress. Logical implication of the Policy is denial of the self-arrogated right of the British Parliament to dictate the political destiny of our country. But mere verbal rejection does not free us from the charter of slavery which is being forced upon us. To be effective, rejection must be followed by the assertion of the right of self-determination. Indeed the democratic principle of self-determination justifies our refusal to assume any responsibility without power. The Congress programme does not entertain the illusion of a gradual transfer of power from the foreign rulers to the people. Our goal is conquest of power. Our path is the path of arduous relentless, resolute struggle. The line of action recommended by the U. P. Congress Committee opens up a revolutionary perspective because, by following it, the

country would take up the struggle for the capture of power

Since our ideal of Democratic Freedom cannot be attained through gradual transfer of power, the immediate task before the Congress is the creation of the organ of the struggle for the conquest of power. Having been convinced that democratic freedom can be established only upon the capture of effective political power by the masses, the Congress has undertaken the task of forging the instrument appropriate for the purpose. The instrument is the Constituent Assembly, which will rise out of the revolutionary struggle against the forces that stand on the road to the freedom of the Indian people. The resolution of the U P Committee is a historic document because it indicates how a concrete step can be taken, here and now, towards the position in which our demand for the election of the Constituent Assembly will eventually be enforced in the teeth of the opposition of those who derive benefit from the slavery of the Indian people.

Unfortunately there seems to be a general reluctance to take the bold step. It may not be conscious. Nevertheless the fact is that until now Congressmen elected to the Legislative Assemblies have not only in conferences to demand convocation of the legislatures. That is a form of constitutional activity which does not confront autocratic power with the principle of popular sovereignty. But until and unless that is done, there

remains the danger of deviation towards some sort of compromise with imperialism on the basis of an improved constitution, still promulgated as an Act of the British Parliament. Obviously that would be surrender of the democratic right of self-determination, and consequently abandonment of the goal of Complete Independence.

Why do the Congressmen elected to the Legislative Assemblies prefer to meet in conferences ( even the U-P group did so just the day after the Executive Council of the P. C. C. passed the historic resolution ) than in sessions of the assemblies themselves? A constitutional scruple lurks behind this preference. And that scruple negatives the principle of popular sovereignty.

In the conventional constitutional sense, by mere election one does not acquire the status of a legislator. Before those elected by the people can perform their function, they must be called to meet by the Executive and take the oath of allegiance to the established state. If this constitutional convention is accepted, then the legislature becomes subservient to the executive, and democracy becomes a fraud. In our case, it would then follow that Congressmen elected by a majority of the electorate cannot perform their legitimate function, can not discharge their moral obligation, until the governors will permit them to do so. The governors do not intend to convene the Legislative Assemblies within six months. So, during this time the



elected majority has no legal locus standi. Should we submit to this humiliating position?

The autocratic power of the governors is derived from the Government of India Act. Eminent lawyers have been endeavouring to prove that the violation of the rudimentary canons of responsible government has been perfectly "constitutional." This contention has been stoutly challenged from our side. But, essentially, Congress parliamentarians have until now been acting within the limits of the constitutional convention that they cannot assume the status of legislators, and function as the chosen tribunes of the people before the governors permit them to do so. That is why they have met in conferences. But that is tacit submission to the worst features of the Constitution we are determined to destroy. Let us not be handicapped by conventional constitutional scruples. Ours is not a constitutional debate. It is a political struggle for the conquest of power. We shall never be able to advance towards that goal if we do not have the courage to challenge the autocratic power of the established executive.

The democratic principle stated in the resolution of the U.P. C.C. should guide our action. Primarily, legislators derive their authority from the electorate. The function of the executive is to administer laws made by the legislative branch of the state. If the prerogative of the executive to bring the legislature into

being is admitted, then, the latter shall have to abdicate its sovereignty. All these considerations, weighty by themselves from the constitutional point of view, are of secondary importance when the fundamental political issue is involved. Then even constitutionally, the very fact of being elected authorises those elected to assume the status of legislators in the face of executive opposition. If the autocratic powers of the governors are "constitutional," the electorate which returned the legislators is also created by the same constitution. Thus we are confronted with the fundamental political issue, the question of power. Whose will shall prevail? The will of the people or of those who to-day happen to occupy the position of power? We are not yet in the position to make the will of the people prevail. But we mean to do so. Otherwise, there would be no meaning to our demand for independence. To day there is an open conflict between the two. We, as the advocates of democratic freedom, must do whatever is possible under the given conditions to demonstrate that we mean to enforce the popular will as against that of the autocratic power. We shall be doing that if the elected majority meets to declare itself as the Legislative Assembly. That would be a practical assertion of popular will as against the resistance of the rulers.

Under favourable circumstances, such an act would have a profound revolutionary repercussion. In history

there have been instances of elected representatives of people assuming the exercise of sovereign right defying the power of the established authorities. If elected by a sufficiently broad suffrage, popular representatives thwarted in the performance of their function, can form the Constituent Assembly. That way is closed to us to-day. The present electorate is too limited. But recurring re-elections, fought on the issue of popular welfare, are sure to increase the Congress majority in the Legislative bodies. Once the majority attains such a proportion as to leave the government with no support whatsoever, the elected representatives meeting as the Legislative Assembly will dissolve it having issued the call for the election of the Constituent Assembly by universal suffrage.

The resolution of the U.P. C.O. opens up this road to power. We must have the courage to stand on it if we are serious about the task set before the country by the Faizpur Congress.

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROBLEM OF ORGANIZATION.

In a few days the country will know the resolution of the Congress Working Committee. It will be a fateful resolution. The course of the development of our struggle for freedom must be clearly indicated. The country needs a courageous lead. We hope it will not be disappointed. There cannot be much discussion about the course to be taken. There is no alternative. We must take up the challenge of imperialism, and mobilize the masses in a relentless struggle for the capture of power. Any other policy would mean compromise on the basis of capitulation. Our opponents are terrified by the potentialities of the situation. They know that a determined offensive is sure to end in a smashing victory for the people. Therefore wiser heads in their camp are counselling moderation and frantically seeking a peaceful solution. Let the offer of peace come from those who, drunk with ill-gotten power, have chosen the war path. Let imperialism bow down before the verdict for the people. Then, and only then, peace will be possible. Meanwhile, let us not talk of peace. Our task is to prepare for war which has been thrust upon us. How to do

that? That is the problem. It is a problem of organization.

Even before the present crisis this problem had commanded the attention of the Congress leadership. The Mass Contact Committee was set up for finding the solution of the problem. The Faizpur Congress widened the scope of the Committee's task. Its recognition of the importance of the problem of organization was evidenced by the decision of the Working Committee to appoint an organizational secretary of the A.L.C.C. Unfortunately, the resolution was not implemented. The most important task of the moment was not properly tackled. It was overshadowed by the election campaign. To-day we are again confronted with the task of building a stable organization of the masses mobilized during the election campaign. Before long we shall have to fight a new election. We must utilize that opportunity for accomplishing what was neglected during the last campaign. The negligence was not wilful. The supreme importance of a stable organization was not clearly realized. Besides, agitation must precede organization. The foundation for a stable organization has been laid. The task must be taken up forthwith, according to a carefully laid policy. The agitation for re-election affords the point of departure for our organizational activity. This time we shall appeal to the people not only to vote for the Congress candidates, but to become members of the Congress.

In the beginning of the present crisis, the idea of a re-election alarmed many a Congressman. But it was not long before it was realized that the only honourable course left to the Congress was to demand a re-election. The government is afraid of re-election. But refusal of the Congress to assume the responsibility of office makes it impossible for the government to avoid a new election indefinitely. That places us in a position of vantage. Since the government will not risk a new election before six months, we shall have plenty of time to build up a powerful mass organization which will enable us to enforce the will of the people to be expressed in the new election. Curiously enough, there are Congressmen who are uneasy about the outcome of the new election. They have only to notice the nervousness of the defenders of the established order to be convinced of the utter groundlessness of the defeatist spirit. Often the revolutionary possibilities of a given situation are visualized more clearly by the opponents of the revolution than by those engrossed with the petty details of the movement. Alarmed by the perspective of a revolutionary development, opened up by the present constitutional crisis, defenders of the established order are busily searching for a peaceful solution. In a letter to the "Manchester Guardian" one of them writes: "The situation is fraught with grave complications-political and social. The popular party will necessarily have recourse to"

agitation in the country and obstructionist tactics in the legislature. The government will be driven to adopt one of several alternatives. The governors will either have to dissolve the legislature and order a fresh election; or carry on the administration himself on his own responsibility for a short period. Either course will have the effect of immensely increasing the strength of the Congress and its hold on the country. There is also the danger of encouraging revolutionary mentality of the type that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wishes to foster. Let us hope that a peaceful solution will be found as quickly as possible."

That is a very significant declaration which should give courage to the vacillating. Even an avowed apologist of the established order sees that the Congress has no other alternative than to demand a fresh election. He is painfully aware also of the certainty of the Congress to come victorious out of another electoral combat. It is to be hoped that the Working Committee will visualize the possibilities of the situation as clearly as the alarmist, and give a courageous lead calculated to bring about the grave social and political consequences so mortally dreaded by those having a stake in the established system of oppression and exploitation.

But only agitation will not do. Nor will obstructionist tactics inside the legislature produce any positive result. Systematic organization alone will

increase the strength of the Congress. And the solution to the problem of organization will be found in a new method of approach to the masses. We must realize that those who voted for the Congress candidates expected that these would work for the redress of their grievances. To-day, the government and its supporters are telling that Congressmen do not care for the welfare of the masses. We must tell the masses that the Congressmen are not permitted to fulfil their promises to the electorate; that the assurance demanded from the governors was that in office Congressmen would be given a free hand to promote the welfare of the people. The refusal of the governor to give the assurance means hostility to popular welfare. Thus the masses will see that it is not a question of desire, but of power. They shall see that the Congress wants to promote their welfare, but does not possess the adequate power. Then they will respond to the call to join the Congress to strengthen it. We shall tell them: you give us your votes; we are returned to the legislatures; but majority in parliament does not carry any real power with it; if you want us to enforce your demands, you must stand behind us as an organized army ready to fight resolutely. Only a small fraction of the people is enfranchised. The bulk of the population, those suffering the most from the ruinous consequences of the present order, have no way of registering their verdict



in the election to the legislatures. They should have a means of expression. Membership of the Congress should serve the purpose. Every man or woman joining the Congress will represent an additional vote to the Congress candidate.

Having enrolled by hundreds and thousands, we must not leave them alone. Mass enrolment has taken place in the past. That alone does not increase the strength of the Congress. They must be activated. And that can be done only through local struggles conducted on the basis of small issues arising out of the daily life of the people. Regular membership meetings should be organized to discuss these issues. These meetings should be differentiated from occasional mass meetings. Day to day activities of local Congress organizations should be planned in the membership meetings. Thus the rank and file will feel themselves parts of an organization and actively involved in all its doings. Local Congress Committees will become genuine democratic bodies expressing the organized will of the masses, entrenched firmly behind the intelligent support of the people. When the Congress becomes country-wide net-work of such committees, we shall have created the sanction necessary for enforcing the verdict of the people. Then, conditions for the rise of the Constituent Assembly will have been created. We shall be in the position to assert the right of self-determination.

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## CHAPTER V.

### MARKING TIME.

Politically mature anti-imperialist forces throughout the country are bound to be dis-appointed by the Working Committee resolution. They have been eagerly waiting for a bold lead. The order is to mark time. The deadlock will continue till it is terminated by some initiative on the part of the government. What is the country to do in the meantime ? There is no plan of action. A hand to mouth policy has brought us to this impasse ; yet we must still follow that line of least resistance which can lead only to political bankruptcy.

This is a fateful period in the history of our struggle for freedom. This is not the time for words. We must speak out our minds. At this critical moment, we find ourselves without leadership. The left wing has failed as conspicuously as the right wing. Of late we have been hearing much about the "Socialist lead" which should replace the present leadership of the Congress. The would-be saviours have signally failed to perform the task they set to themselves. The cause of this bankruptcy of the left wing is the romantic notion that the country is waiting for a Socialist lead. Those who pretend to offer an alternative leadership, should know what sort of leader-

ship is really needed. For the immediate purposes of the anti imperialist struggle there is nothing incurably wrong with the present leadership of the Congress. We have an avowed Socialist at the head of our movement. Yet things somehow do not move as they should. Why is it so? Because Socialist propaganda is no substitute for planned political action, devotion to the ideal of a new, revolutionary, social order is not enough for accomplishing the immediate task of creating conditions in which the realization of the ideal will become a practical proposition. In short, we do not want a "Socialist lead," which, under the given conditions of the country, and relation of the forces involved in our struggle for freedom can only be a remote possibility. For the moment, the country needs, and needs very urgently, a bold plan of political action for putting the resolutions of the Congress into practice. It is not a matter of socialist theory, but of revolutionary practice. We need a leadership capable of organizing revolutionary action. And under the given condition of our country, and in view of the social basis of the movement for national freedom, belief in Socialism is not the criterion of revolutionary leadership. On the other hand, belief in Socialism alone does not necessarily equip people with the ability for planning and leading revolutionary political action. This has been demonstrated by the political bankruptcy of the left wing which promised us an alternative leadership.

The left wing has failed in this critical moment because



not be given or it will be given in some form or other. In the first case, our task is to go over to extra-parliamentary action, which must be carefully planned if it is to be more effective than in the past. The other perspective raises the question what policy should Congressmen follow in office? The idea of working the Constitution is excluded. So acceptance of office even on our terms would bring us back to a new constitutional dead lock. Since to-day none seem to be able to find such a way out of the dead lock as will lead towards our goal of freedom, there is no reason to believe that we shall be any better off when a similar dead lock will be brought about by our own action. Consequently we shall be moving in a vicious circle. That is not a very inspiring perspective. So let us not drift. Let us not mark time. No use seeking such a way out of dead-lock as will lead directly to another dead lock.

Instead of waiting patiently for a change of heart on the part of imperialism, we should go ahead boldly with a positive programme of action. In previous issues we have traced the only line of action possible in the given situation. The suggested line of action was incorporated in the resolution of the Executive Council of the U P C C. We expected that the Working Committee would endorse it. But our leaders are not yet prepared to move that way. Perhaps they think that the country is not ready for a decisive struggle for the capture of power. It may not be, but the task of leadership is to see that it is as

soon as possible. And the present constitutional crisis presents us with the opportunity for mobilizing the masses with the object of asserting the right of self-determination.

Although the Working Committee has not placed before the country a concrete plan of action, the perspective of a new election is definitely there. In the beginning of the crisis even left wingers were horrified at the idea of a new election. Now practically every body has got used to the idea. It is inevitable. So, why wait and see? Let us take the initiative and demand a re-election. It is a perfectly legitimate and constitutional demand. There is sharp conflict between the majority of popular representatives and the executive authority. The question should be referred to the electorate. That should be our demand. Otherwise, we shall be forced to be on the defensive. We shall have to go to the electorate and explain why we did not accept office, and implement our election manifesto. Instead of arguing that the constitution permits the governors to give the assurance demanded, let us declare that representing the majority of the electorate we refuse to accept the responsibility of office without the power to fulfil our promises to the electorate. The demand for re-election on the issue that Ministers with a majority shall have effective power to discharge their responsibility to the electorate, will mobilize the people in a decisive struggle against the new charter of slavery. The atmo-

will be created in which the rise of the Constituent Assembly, as the organ for the capture of power by the people, will become a practical proposition. The final stages of the struggle against the dictatorship of a foreign parliament will have to be fought with the slogan of the Constituent Assembly. The constitution made by the British Parliament and imposed upon us will not be really wrecked before the Indian people has found the way to assert the right of self-determination. That will be done by electing the Constituent Assembly to make the fundamental law of a revolutionary democratic state.

By taking the initiative, by carrying on the campaign for re-election on a concrete programme of legislation in addition to the fundamental issue of power, the Congress is sure to secure a greater majority. Then it will be possible to do what might be rather premature today. Today a meeting of the opposition majority as the Legislative Assembly can have only the significance of a political demonstration. The idea of such a gathering actually making laws is yet premature. It is but an idle pastime to make laws which cannot be enforced. To pass resolutions demanding certain legislation is not the same as actually making laws. A popular assembly must have adequate power before it takes up the legislative function, and it must begin by making the fundamental law of the new state. After the next election, with a greater majority, the Congress will have advanced

towards a position in which it may be able to issue the call for the election of the Constituent Assembly. The power necessary for backing up that action will have been found in the mass organizations to be created in course of the extra-parliamentary campaign conducted in the meantime. But the extra-parliamentary action must be of different kind. Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience are antiquated weapons. No use casting wistful glance at them. We must find new forms and methods of mass action.

The main thing however is the determination to utilize the present constitutional crisis as the point of departure for an intensified struggle against imperialism. The struggle against the new constitution is bound to end in a compromise—another Delhi Pact, or Round Table Conference unless it means a relentless struggle against imperialism. The Working Committee resolution does not give a signal for such a struggle. Therefore it is disappointing.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

"Congressmen should realise that parliamentary work is but a minor part of the national programme and that the great objective of complete independence can only be secured by sustained efforts by every Congressman and Congresswoman in carrying out the programme outside the legislature as laid down from time to time." That is the most important passage of the resolution of the Working Committee. It opens up the perspective of mass action. Unfortunately, that perspective has never been made sufficiently clear even for those who have been for years travelling on that revolutionary road. Even today it remains as clouded as ever.

The Working Committee resolution once again reminds the country that there is no other road to freedom. It is a timely reminder, and is sure to counteract the danger of "parliamentary mentality" gaining ground alarmingly. But we are constrained to note that the programme of extra-parliamentary activity recommended in the resolution does not clarify the perspective of mass action. As a matter of fact, the decision of the Working Committee is to leave political initiative with the parliamentarians, while the activity of the rank and file is to

be limited by the traditional "Constructive Programme". Thus, political activity of the Congress, at least for the time being, is to be dominated by parliamentary mentality. Although, to a great extent, the Congress has simply blundered into this undesirable position, the process has not been an altogether unconscious drift. We only need remember Gandhiji's opinion, expressed already more than two years ago, that parliamentary mentality had come to stay. The general trend of the Working Committee resolution bears out Gandhiji. In as much as it does that, it puts a check upon revolutionary mass action, although it does keep that perspective open before us. That is the contradiction of the resolution. It is bound to confuse the rank and file of the Congress, and may weaken our struggle for freedom, unless the confusion is clarified by courageous but constructive criticism.

To begin with, it is necessary to be convinced of one point. It is that parliamentary mentality cannot conceive of revolutionary action. It is another name for constitutionalism. If it has really come to stay, then, the Congress has abandoned the stormy course of mass action. But that is not possible so long as it stands by the ideal of complete independence as defined by the Faizpur resolution. The ideal of complete independence can be attained only through the capture of power by the Indian people. And political power can be captured only through the revolutionary action of the masses.

The Congress has not given up the ideal of complete independence. But the growth of parliamentary mentality in the leading circle tends to replace the perspective of the capture of power by the perspective of the transfer of power. Even those who represent this tendency may not realize the difference between the two perspectives. But the difference is very great.

The idea that power may ever be transferred from the foreign rulers to the Indian people, presupposes that the former will eventually be agreeable to the process. Obviously, transfer of power can take place only with the consent of its present possessors. Belief in the very possibility of the transfer of power therefore obviates the necessity of the revolutionary mass action indispensable for the conquest of power. The argument that the possessor of power may be compelled to transfer it, contradicts the very idea of transfer. If the transfer takes place under compulsion, then it is no longer transfer. It is capture by those who compel. As a matter of fact, political power is never transferred voluntarily or by agreement. It has never happened in history. In order to attain the goal of complete independence, the Congress shall have to lead the masses in the struggle for the capture of political power. The establishment of a genuine democratic state, of a government really responsible to the people, is conditional upon the transfer of effective political power to the masses; and such a transfer can take place only through conquest.

But the parliamentary mentality lurking behind the Working Committee resolution does not visualise such a line of development. The constitutional dead-lock is not to be used as the point of departure for an extra-parliamentary mass campaign with the object of asserting the right of self-determination. The programme of extra-parliamentary action recommended in the resolution is not political. It has no direct bearing upon the situation characterised by a sharpening of the issue of power. Activities on the line suggested will not quicken the political consciousness of the masses. It will not mobilize them in the struggle for the capture of power.

Indeed, the resolution does not raise the question of power. Instead of declaring that the Congress refuses to accept the responsibility of administration without the requisite power, it seeks to justify the refusal by far-fetched constitutional arguments. Whatever may be the force of these arguments, they are irrelevant for our purpose which is, to wreck the new constitution. And this declared purpose of the Congress signifies refusal to recognize the authority of the British Parliament to legislate for the government of India.

But, very surprisingly, the idea of wrecking the new constitution is absent in the Working Committee resolution. According to the resolution, "the dead-lock is created by the refusal of the governors to give the

assurance asked on behalf of the Congress? It is true that the dead lock has been precipitated by imperialist intransigence. But the resolution appears to convey the impression that the Congress did not want to create a dead-lock. Indeed, in a statement to the press Gandhiji said so. What happens then to our purpose of wrecking the constitution? Has not the Congress time and again declared the determination to bring about a constitutional dead lock in pursuance of that purpose? Is there any other way of wrecking the constitution? The motive with which the Congress decided to enter the legislatures created by the new constitution, was to obstruct its working. The decisive argument in favour of the tactics of office-acceptance was that it would be more effective for the purpose of wrecking the constitution. Now not only is the responsibility of creating the dead lock ascribed to the governors even the very intention of bringing one about, is disowned by implication, if not explicitly. To hold that the dead-lock has been created by the refusal of the governors to give the assurance asked on behalf of the Congress, is to admit that if the assurance was given, there would be no dead lock. This is a damaging admission. We do not believe that the supporters of the fateful resolution are opposed to the idea of wrecking. We only wish to point out that parliamentary mentality does run counter to the declared policy of the Congress because that policy can be carried

## THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

only through revolutionary mass action. Parliamentary action can be useful only in so far as it serves as a lever for activising the masses

The resolution further maintains that the desired assurance would have enabled the Congress members in the legislatures to accept office, and that, presumably then the dead-lock would have been avoided. This is a more damaging admission. The question of power is clean forgotten.

Immediately upon the precipitation of the crisis, Jawaharlal very correctly pointed out that dead-locks are inherent in a constitution made without the consent of the people. How then could Congressmen in office avoid dead-locks, and yet remain true to the avowed purpose of wrecking the constitution? The refusal of the governors to give the assurance that they would not interfere with the "constitutional activities" of the ministers is one more proof of the fact that the constitution does not transfer any power to the representatives of the people. Even before this additional evidence was available, there could not be any doubt about the worthlessness of the constitution. Therefore the Congress all along ridiculed the proposition of working it for what it is worth. Since the constitution does not vest any power in the ministers, under no condition could Congressmen accept office except with the avowed purpose of creating dead-locks which sharpen the conflict between the people and the

established state, and thus place the question of power on the order of the day

We hope that the ambiguities contained in the Working Committee resolution will be cleared before long. Otherwise, the essence of the resolution, the idea of mass action, will be lost. Parliamentary mentality prevalent in the leading-circles should be overwhelmed by the revolutionary spirit of the rank and file. Today it dominates Congress politics. If it has really come to stay, then the ideal of complete independence will recede farther and farther away. We shall never deviate from the road to the goal, today well within reach, provided that we do not allow ourselves to be deluded by the utterly unfounded belief in the possibility of a voluntary transfer of power. Our resounding victory in the last election raised the allimportant issue of power. The deadlock has sharpened the issue. Let it not be side-tracked. The struggle for the capture of power is ahead of us. Let us prepare for it.

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## CHAPTER VII

### MASS CONTACT.

Now that the important post of the Organising Secretary of the A. I. C. C. has been filled, it is to be hoped that something concrete will at last be done for establishing the much desired mass contact. As a matter of fact, the problem is not how to have contact with masses. The contact is already there. The Congress is a mass movement. Its strength lies in the growth of popular discontent against the established order of things. The political awakening of the masses is the indicator of their discontent. The Congress is the emblem of that awakening. It commands the confidence of the masses. That is the positive achievement which provides a sound basis for a powerful organization. The problem therefore is how to organize the mobilized masses into a well disciplined army equipped for offensive and defensive action according to a carefully laid plan ; it is how to transform a mass movement into a revolutionary political party, or, how to build up such a party organization as will be able to develop the discontent of the masses into a conscious will for freedom, and lead them in the struggle against the forces of political oppression and economic exploitation



The solution of the problem naturally depends upon the discovery of the correct approach to it. Two years ago, the Lucknow Congress set up the Mass Contact Committee. It was to report to the next session of the Congress. Unfortunately, the Committee got involved in to a controversy over a point of organisational technique, namely, collective membership. It could not find the approach to the core of the problem. The result was that it failed to make any concrete recommendation for the consideration of the Faizpur Congress. There was a tentative report submitted by one of the members. But in the mean time experience had shown that the constitution of the Congress made the problem of organization very difficult to tackle practically. Many felt that the desired transformation of the Congress into an effectively functioning political party required a recasting of its constitution. A plan was submitted for the consideration of the Working Committee. But no definite decision was taken by the Faizpur Congress. Only a resolution was passed extending the scope of the old Mass Contact Committee, which, enlarged by the inclusion of two more members, was authorized to report if any amendment to the constitution was necessary. The report was to be ready by April. The Faizpur resolution indicates that the slogan of mass contact involved fundamental principles of organization. It also indicated the realization that the task of organizing the masses into an effective force was urgent. Yet this most

important task of the moment is still to be tackled properly.

Organizational weakness is preventing the Congress from adopting the bold line of action that could develop the present constitutional dead-lock into a first class revolutionary crisis. A vast majority of the electorate has voted for the Congress candidates. The enfranchised millions demonstrate their sympathy with the Congress by attending mass meetings. But there is no systematic political activity for them. Casting votes and attending occasional meetings are not sufficient occupation for a revolutionary movement. An amorphous mass of discontent responds to the emotional appeal made by the Congress. It is not an organized force. It is not a trained army. This being the case, the Congress to-day is unable to undertake the struggle for the capture of power. And this inability is forcing it to adopt a policy which contradicts the ideal of complete independence. Inability to organize mass actions throws us back upon parliamentary manoeuvrings which can never bring us anywhere near our goal. We still cherish the ideal of complete independence, but we have not found the way to it. Even those who have visualized the way do not know how to travel on it. No use talking of mass action when there is no revolutionary party to organize and lead that action. Unless the Congress can transform itself into a revolutionary party, it will never be able to

organize effective mass action for the conquest of power

The Working Committee resolution shows that the correct approach to the organizational problem has not yet been found. Rightly laying stress upon the importance of extra parliamentary mass activity, the resolution has no other way to indicate than the old "Constructive Programme." Ever since 1922 this programme has been before the country. He would be a bold man who could assert that it has strengthened the Congress organizationally or quickened the political consciousness of the masses. Whatever may be its immediate economic merit, it certainly does not mobilize the masses in a struggle against the forces of oppression and exploitation. In any case, even the maximum possible activity on the basis of that programme would affect only a small fraction of the people. Besides, an organization for that sort of activity cannot be a fighting organization. A mutual help association, however valuable may be the services it does render, is not a political party. It is not an accident that, in the past, the "Constructive Programme" of Gandhiji could not be practised by the Congress; special organizations had to be created for the purpose.

Organizational activities of the Congress must have a distinct political purpose. They must be of such a nature as will sharpen the antagonism against the established order of things. Since discontent against the established order of things lies at the bottom of

the political awakening of the masses, no mass organization can be politically effective unless it functions as the vehicle for the expression of that discontent. Therefore the only way to mass contact is a plan of systematic action which will make the masses realize that the struggle for the redress of their daily grievances is an integral part of the struggle for national freedom. In other words, the Congress will become a powerful political party commanding the confidence of the masses only by leading them in the struggles of their daily life.

But with all the concern for mass contact, the way to the objective is not yet found. Or, our leaders seem to be unwilling to travel the only road to organizational security. The newly appointed Organizing Secretary of the A I C C Jairamdas Daulatram, while explaining the Working Committee resolution at a meeting at Karachi, said : "The effective part of the resolution so far as Congressmen are concerned is that they should establish more living contact with the masses by serving them and attending to their needs, and carry on the constructive programme of the Congress." Here again we find the regrettable failure to find the correct approach to the problem. However, the mass activity visualised is not limited by the "Constructive Programme." So much to the good. But the question is how can the needs of the masses be properly and effectively attended to? The humanitarian idea of social service won't

do. The most effective way of serving the masses and attending to their needs will be to organize them and lead them in the struggle against those forces which deprive them of their needs. If the local Congress Committees are directed to travel this way the baffling problem of mass contact will be solved before long, and the Congress will become a powerful organization able to take up the struggle for the capture of power which is the only means to the goal of complete independence.

For the purpose of transforming the Congress into an organized political party, two things are essential—systematic functioning of the primary committees and activation of the membership. An inflated number of four-anna members does not strengthen the Congress organizationally. Political value of such formal adhesion is also dubious. Activation of the present membership is much more important than the enrolment of new members. It is all the more so when mass enrolment is often fictitious. The responsibility of active members should not end on the enrolment of new members adequate for securing their election to the local committees. It should include activation and political education of the new recruits. A strict control of enrolment will be highly beneficial. It is better to have a few real members performing some concrete task than to have a large number of nominal members.

At present, the ordinary member has nothing more to do than pay four-annas once a year and attend occa-

sional meetings, which is done also by many others who are not formal members of the Congress. That constitutes his responsibility. The only right of membership is to elect the local committee. There is no special political activity associated with Congress membership. That is the root cause of our organizational weakness. No revolutionary political party can function effectively except as an instrument of collective activity. Every member must be actively contributing something concrete to the struggle for the realization of the party programme.

The local Congress Committees are equally inactive, most of the time. They perform no systematic day to day function. Therefore, they do not possess any abiding organizational contact with the masses who are generally sympathetic toward the Congress. Until now the local Congress Committees have failed to become the vehicle for the expression of mass discontent. That is very regrettable, since objectively the strength of the Congress is derived from growing mass discontent. Mass contact will be firmly established only when the local Congress Committees will become the focus of mass discontent.

The constitutional dead-lock is driving us back to the masses. It is almost certain that before long there will be a new election. In any case, to-day the only course compatible with our policy of wrecking the Government of India. Act is a flat refusal to accept

office and demand re-election. The election campaign will present us with the opportunity for establishing closer contact with the masses. That will be done by making our electoral programme more concrete, by including the demand for immediate legislation, to safeguard and promote the welfare of the masses. Then local Congress Committees should be directed to conduct continuous agitation in support of the demand. Every primary member should participate actively in the agitation. That agitation with partial economic demands will be linked up with the fundamental political demand for the Constituent Assembly. The Congress will be organizationally strengthened in the process. The masses will be prepared to follow it further than the polling booths. Their political awakening will transcend mere attendance at meetings. It will develop into revolutionary consciousness. The Congress then will become the organized vanguard of a huge army fighting for democratic freedom.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DEADLOCK

Six major provinces of India are since the inauguration of the New Constitution in the grip of constitutional dead-lock which has so far defied any solution. The dead-locks did not just happen, but were deliberately created in pursuance of the oft-declared policy of the Congress to wreck the New Constitution. The Congress is pledged to the policy of wrecking since the talk about the New Constitution started. Even when the Congress decided at Delhi to accept offices, it did not abandon that policy. It decided to accept offices in order to wreck the Constitution more effectively. Assurances were demanded not with a view to facilitate the working of the Reforms, but in order to make their working impossible. To create dead-locks in order to wreck the Constitution has been the consistent policy of the Congress. Owing to the intransigence of the Imperialist government, dead-locks were created much earlier than was expected. The dead-locks have by themselves, and more particularly by the manner in which they were created, completely exposed the autocratic nature of the Constitution and proved beyond any shadow of doubt that British imperialism is not prepared to part even with an iota of its power.



We wanted the dead lock, but when the dead-lock is there we do not seem to know how to utilise it. We seem to be at a loss to know what to do with the dead-lock and how best to utilise it for raising our national struggle to a higher stage. We seem to be groping in the dark for a way out, and as we have not yet been able to find and firmly grasp the only correct way out of the crisis, we content ourselves with marking time and in the meanwhile make vigorous protestations about our reasonableness and amiability.

Some of our most influential and trusted leaders have placed themselves in this most unenviable position. They are more keen on protesting their willingness to work with in the 'Constitution', their dislike of dead locks and their anxiety for a 'Constitutional' solution of the same, than on indicating to the country the way ahead. The country is looking to them for guidance in the difficult situation created by the crisis, but instead it is getting from them learned disquisitions on the constitutionality of the Congress demand and the unconstitutional character of the Governor's actions.

This undesirable state of affairs is due to the failure to understand the fundamental causes and the essential character of the dead lock. It is not strictly speaking a constitutional crisis as such, turning upon the interpretation of a clause or clauses of the Constitution. It is a struggle between the will of British Imperialism and the will of the Indian People. The will of British Im-

perialism desires to retain India as its colonial possession, where as it is the desire and the will of the Indian People to be free from the bondage of British Imperialism and to be the masters in their own country. These two wills are conflicting and irreconcilable. There can never be a compromise or an understanding between the two. The present constitutional dead-lock is but a mild form of this conflict between the two wills, which is one day bound to assume very serious proportions. The New Constitution embodies the will of British Imperialism, while the Congress demand for assurances is but a faint expression of the Indian people's desire to have a free hand in their own country.

It is futile to expect therefore that there can be a 'constitutional' solution of the dead-locks. Such an expectation amounts in fact to a tacit acknowledgment that it is possible to secure the welfare of the masses within the framework of the New Constitution. But the Congress has times without number declared that it is not possible and therefore rejected the Constitution. The Constitution does not allow the Congressmen any opportunities for working for the welfare of the masses. It is therefore to be wrecked and substituted by a Constitution prepared by a Constituent Assembly of the Indian People. 'A constitutional' solution of the crisis will be a submission to the hated Constitution and an agreement to work it for what it is worth. Such a course of action will run coun-

ter to the declared policy and the cherished ideals of the congress

The anxiety for a 'constitutional' solution of the crisis has led Gandhiji, Rajagopalachari and others following in their footsteps, into very dangerous channels. These two veteran leaders of the Congress have by their recent statements reduced the constitutional crisis to a difference between dismissal and resignation. This as we have pointed out elsewhere is a difference without a distinction. But the point that deserves serious notice is, that this line of thinking leads the Congress to the very path it has deliberately rejected and to a point it has refused to go. How can the Congress, after having unceremoniously rejected the Constitution, agree to work it in the name of a 'constitutional' solution of the crisis?

For the solution of the dead-lock we have to look not to the Constitution, not to the persuasive eloquence of constitutional lawyers, nor to the sweet reasonableness or the change of heart of British Imperialism. A solution dependant on them will be a solution not to our advantage but to that of our adversaries. A solution such as will advance our cause, accelerate our march towards our goal of national independence, can come only as a result of our redoubled strength. Let us therefore decide to utilise the dead locks for increasing the political education and consciousness of our people for activating and mobilising them, for organising them into Congress committees as fighting units of our army of national liberation.

dence. Let the Congress leaders instead of indulging in learned constitutional dissertations bend themselves to this task, which alone can guarantee our success in this encounter with British Imperialism.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### FACE THE REALITY

M. GANDHI's latest pronouncement on the constitutional dead-lock justifies the apprehensions entertained by us and expressed in our columns from time to time. We have been feeling all along that the solicitude of our leaders for a peaceful solution of the crisis, would in the end lead us to a surrender to imperialism. We seem to be very near that logical culmination of all our acts and omissions during the last two months. The latest formula invented by Gandhiji would in all probability remove the last obstacle and bring about a 'peaceful and constitutional' solution of the crisis.

We were never able to understand the subtle and vital distinction that our leaders were making between resignation and dismissal and how dismissal was more

honourable than resignation. Gandhiji's latest formula "I personally would be satisfied, however, if the Governor gave an undertaking that in such a case he would demand his Ministers' resignations" has set that dispute at rest and opened up the way for Congressmen accepting offices. We do not feel the Government would be so insolent or pig headed as to refuse this modest undertaking and throw away this opportunity of yoking the Congressmen to the responsibilities of office,

The 'peaceful and constitutional' solution our leaders were hankering after is thus in sight. Beyond doubt it will be peaceful and constitutional. But would it be honourable? Has imperialism affected the slightest change in its position? Has it parted with an iota of its power? Has it granted any assurance to the Congress that the special powers will not be used by the Governors? Nobody who has perused the statements of Lord Zetland or the provincial Governors would be in a position to answer these questions in the affirmative. They have not advanced an inch further, they have not made any conciliatory move, they have not made the slightest modification in their original position. This is conceded by M. Gandhi himself. It is we who have gone back not half way but the whole length to meet them. It is no use hiding this obvious fact, it is no use shutting our eyes to this glaring truth. We shall harm ourselves and impede our search for effective methods, if we seek to hide the nakedness of our fallacy by metaphysical

talks about ordinary human virtues and tests of sincerity etc.

Failure and surrender face us not because we were not strong, not because we have been beaten in a fight against heavy odds. We find ourselves in this situation because we were irresolute, we refused to fight, we relied more on lawbooks and constitutional precedents than on the organised strength of the people. The constitutional crisis created by the refusal of Congressmen to accept offices had in it the germs of a revolutionary situation. It could have been easily developed into a serious political crisis. Imperialism had been placed in a tight corner. Its moral position had been shaken. It had been checkmated by its own instruments. On the other hand, the popular forces were ready for a struggle. The electoral successes had infused in them a new life and a new consciousness of strength. They possessed vigour and energy and had they been shown the way and given a correct and a determined leadership, they would have readily joined issues with imperialism for the assertion of the right of their representatives to govern the country in their interests. We failed to take advantage of that favourable situation, we failed to utilise the crisis for developing our struggle to a higher stage, for taking another step in the direction of the capture of political power.

Our failure is due to certain wrong notions which are still encumbering our political ideology and acting

as a barker on our political movement. Some of our top leaders do not seem to have yet shaken off their pathetic faith in the sincerity of the British Government and desire to test it from time to time. It is high time that every Indian realised that it is a political and an economic system which is ruling over us and that in a system there is no place for sincerity. During the hundred and fifty years of British rule Indians had enough tests of the sincerity of the British Government and they do not stand in need of any more tests which have invariably the unerring tendency of disorganising and demoralising their struggles. The notion of achieving independence by constitutional means, acts as an effective barker on the development of the mass movement. In the present case the illusion that there could be 'constitutional' solution of the crisis prevented our leaders from initiating and developing mass action which alone could have secured a solution honorable to the Indian people.

We have no desire to find fault and apportion blame. Our only desire is to acquaint Congressmen with the realities of the situation and to invite their attention to what could have been done in order that a similar situation in future may find them better prepared to take advantage of it. For the crises are bound to recur. Conflict between the people of India and British Imperialism and the consequent constitutional and political crises are inherent in the (cont-

tution itself, in as much as the Constitution is the instrument of British Imperialism devised for the perpetuation of its rule. Conflicts will stop only when the Indian People will get in their hands effective political power. Till then every crisis must be utilised for furthering and intensifying that decisive struggle for the capture of political power.

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## CHAPTER X

### THE CONFESSION OF MONOPOLIST

My presidential address to the U P. Youths Conference has provoked a good deal of criticism. That is welcome. A number of fundamental issues has been purposely raised. It is but natural that the views of any particular person may not be approved of, or acceptable to, all. I claim the right to the freedom of thought and of expressing my thoughts. Others have the same right. I do not resent criticism; nor am I afraid of meeting my critics. So far all the criticism of the views expressed in the address, has been mere expression of doubt or disagreement. Nobody has as yet proved that my



critique of the ideology of ortho-dox nationalism is unfounded or that the charge of neo-constitutional deviation on the part of some of our top leaders, is false. Therefore it is not necessary for me to defend my views. They may not find favour with everybody but they stand for what they are worth so long as they are not proved to be erroneous or unfounded.

The "Amrita Bazar Patrika" of Calcutta, for example has treated the matter in a way which can be called fair criticism. It has expressed its disagreement with my views, while not doubting or disputing my *bona fides*. That is the proper spirit with which all controversy should be carried on, if it is to be fruitful. And there should be free and frank discussion of all views. Complete freedom of thought and the right to question and criticise, are the essential conditions for the growth of a great popular movement like our struggle for freedom. None should claim infallibility. None should be followed blindly. No one can ever be so great as to do the thinking for all. There must be leadership; there must be centralisation. But there must also be democracy. The rank and file should have the right to express their doubts about the wisdom of the leaders and express disagreement with their line of action. When this right is denied, the movement is bound to stagnate. We are faced with this danger. The burden of my address is to sound the alarm.

I am glad to note that with all its disagreement with

my views the "Amrit Bazar Patrika" concedes me the right. Its critique is not vitiated by intolerance and the spirit of monopoly which are the characteristic features of some others, also displeased by my views. It concludes one of its editorials devoted to my address with the following sentence: "Even if it is true that the leaders are not able to keep pace with the movement, there is nothing that can prevent our young hopefuls from forging ahead and compelling the leaders to follow" That is exactly what I have said. And I have shown that the leaders are not keeping pace with the movement. If under the pressure of well-meant criticism, they will quicken the pace, *and that in the right direction*, I for one will follow willingly.

In the same editorial the "Patrika" maintains that there is no ground for my contention that "the perspective of a relentless struggle for capture of power, as the only way to political independence, has disappeared in the mist of the unfounded hope for gradual transfer of power" It writes: "We are not aware that any responsible Congress leader expects a gradual transfer of power as a result of working the constitution" Blind faith precludes knowledge. Therefore the "Patrika" is not aware of an indisputable fact

Commenting upon Lord Zetland's speech Gandhiji made the following very significant declaration: "The Congress is in earnest, and wants to make a serious effort, if it takes office to make a substantial advance

*by that method towards its unequivocal goal of complete independence in so far as it is constitutionally possible to make that advance"* Again, in a press interview immediately after the Allahabad meeting of the Working Committee Gandhiji expressed his surprise that the British Cabinet should resent the fact that the Congress is out for complete independence. He said "They (the British Cabinet) should plainly tell the Congress and the world that they would not tolerate complete independence, and should cease to play with the word autonomy" He then added "If they do not mind the natural evolution of India to its destiny, they must treat Congress with the consideration its position demands, and disarm suspicion that owing to their speech and action is deepening."

Now, the significance of these words pronounced by the most supreme authority in the Congress, is unmistakable. For one thing, according to Gandhiji, acceptance of office by Congressmen will be a substantial advance towards the goal of complete independence. India will be completely independent when political power will come to the possession of her people. Unless it is believed that effective political power could possibly pass from the foreign rulers to the Indian people through the process of Congressmen administering the new constitution, there would be no sense in making a serious effort for that purpose. The addition of the adjective "unequivocal" does not help. It may

delude the trusting soul ; but to the critically minded, it tells a different story. The kind of "complete independence" that can possibly be attained, or even approximated, through the method of taking office, is not complete independence in the sense of the possession of effective political power by the Indian people. The adjective therefore is a mere verbal embellishment. Besides, most of our leaders believe that Ireland and Egypt, for example, have become free through a gradual transfer of power.

Secondly, to be surprised by the fact that the British Cabinet resent our demand for complete independence is to admit the possibility of imperialism sympathising with that demand ; and that admission again means belief in the possibility of the British rulers transferring political power to the Indian people. Thirdly, Gandhiji says that if the British do not intend to tolerate our being independent, they should cease to talk of autonomy. What does that mean ? It means that autonomy, offered by imperialism, is, if not identical with, at least an advance towards, complete independence. Again, there is the belief in the possibility of a transfer of power. Gandhiji appears to believe that when imperialism offers autonomy, it demonstrates its readiness for abdicating at least a part of effective power. Finally, Gandhiji assumes that imperialism may "not mind the natural evolution of India to its destiny." If all these things do not indicate that the unfounded hope for a

perty, I and my kind are not bound by any resolution which does not fit in with our philosophy; if the idea of complete political independence contradicts our moral codes and religious creeds, that idea must be scrapped.

Mass struggle for the capture of power, definition of complete independence as the establishment of a democratic state in which effective political power will be in possession of the majority of the people, the demand for a Constituent Assembly as the instrument for the assertion of the right of self-determination—these were the outstanding features of the resolutions of the Faizpur Congress. The inclusion of these revolutionary political ideas in its resolutions marks out the Faizpur session as a turning point in the history of the Congress. These ideas, which give a concrete shape to the ideal of complete independence and open up before the Congress the perspective of a revolutionary struggle for the attainment of its goal, are incompatible with the moral dogmas, religious creeds, pseudo-philosophical doctrines that have been dominating our movement for political freedom. Consequently, *they have been scrapped*, as mere fads. That is the admission of those who would hound heretics out of the Congress, because these stand loyally by the ideal of complete independence. After this it is hardly necessary to take the furor of the Madras paper seriously. The jury of public opinion is sure to convict the culprit on his own admission corroborated by overt acts. But, it will be illuminating to

show how far the monopolists are prepared to go to defend their untenable position.

I am compared with Jamnadas Mehta, K. V. Reddy, Sapru and Sastri. On what ground? Because I have maintained: "Time and again the masses have been told that the Congress is determined to help them. But it has not yet been explained how the conditions of the masses will be improved" Instead of showing that this charge is unfounded, that the Congress has ever elaborated a programme of social reconstruction, the mouthpiece of the monopolist thunders, "a person who can claim that the Congress has not even evolved a policy for the benefit of the masses" is a heretic and must be hounded out. As the only positive answer to my charge I am directed to visit Bardoli and Champaran "to examine whether for the redemption of the masses a class struggle with all its attendant violence and misery, is essential" This again is another damaging confession. I said: The fierce dislike for class struggle is likely to transform Swaraj into a Fascist Dictatorship" Our Madras contemporary exclaims indignantly, "in other words, the Congress is directly heading for Fascism." But mere exclamation, however dramatically done, does not hide the confession made in the same breath. The fierce dislike for class struggle is admittedly there. Harmony in a class-ridden society is the ideal of orthodox nationalism. The fundamental doctrine of Fascism is subordination of class interest ( of the exploited classes )

to national interest. Things equal to the same thing are equal to one another

I am not the first to detect and be alarmed by this pronounced Fascist tendency in the leading circle of the Congress. In his autobiography, Jawaharlal Nehru has indicated the danger. Our struggle for freedom, however, is a revolutionary struggle. The Fascist tendency born of a reactionary philosophy, is bound to be overwhelmed as soon as it will outgrow the present monopolist leadership.

Finally, I take the opportunity to proclaim my firm faith in the revolutionary potentiality of the Congress. I also hereby swear unswerving loyalty to this powerful movement created by the political awakening and social discontent of the masses. This potential movement must be transformed into a great democratic organization. Freedom of thought and a critical outlook are essential for the purpose. I have the courage of conviction. I am not terrified by the displeasure of the gods, either of the heaven or of the earth. Truth must be told. Lies must be exposed. A revolutionary knows no authority.

I conclude with the following quotation from the "Amrita Bazar Patrika" "For ourselves, we do not think that the future of the Congress is bound up with the future of a handful of leaders who may choose to work the new constitution" This was written in course of criticising my address. But my view could not be more truthfully summarised

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## CHAPTER XI

### END THE DEADLOCK

Before long there must be a final decision. The responsibility is of the Working Committee which will meet in July. The rank and file should express their opinion so that the fateful decision may reflect the will of the masses. There are only two alternatives before us. Which is to be chosen? A realistic appreciation of our forces should determine the choice. It is worse than useless to indulge in verbal heroics when we are unable to enforce our resolutions. We must avoid stubbornness which may wreck the Congress, instead of wrecking the constitution.

By August, at the latest, Legislative Assemblies in all the dead-locked Provinces shall have to be convened. The *interim* Ministries, acting on orders, may refuse to resign as soon as popular majorities pass votes of no-confidence in them. But before long they are bound to be thrown out with their budgets. Once supplies are refused, they shall have no choice. They must resign. Even as a matter of constitutional routine, the Governors shall have to invite the Congress leaders to take up the responsibility of office. What are we going to do in that situation? Let us carefully consider the question, and come to a clear decision well ahead of time. We



have drifted long enough with a hand to mouth policy

There is no ground for any illusion about the intents and purposes of our imperialist overlords. They have made their position quite clear. They are not going to give any definite assurance as demanded by the Congress originally.

In his speech at Oxford, Lord Zetland has made it clear that they cannot trust the Congress Ministers so long as the Falspur resolution stands. And for us, rank and file Congressmen, Falspur resolution stands as firmly as ever. Having time and again condemned the new constitution as a new charter of the colonial slavery of the Indian people, the Congress can never agree to work it. But the electorate created by the constitution has returned Congress candidates in majorities. Wherever such a situation obtains, the governor is bound to invite the leader of the Congress Party to form the Ministry. We should take advantage of this favourable situation with the sole and often repeated policy of wrecking the constitution, of breaking the newly galvanised chain of slavery. So let us stop the verbal warfare, and take up the challenge of imperialism from the position of vantage gained by our victory in the election.

In the given situation, the only course commensurate with the declared policy of the Congress, is to go ahead and seize whatever little power is available to the Ministers under the new constitution. There should be no

illusion, no neo-constitutionalist plan of utilising office for strengthening the position of the Congress in the country. The purpose of the policy of accepting office, not on the invitation of the governors, nor on any assurance of imperialism, but by virtue of commanding the confidence of the majority of the electorate, is defined by the Delhi resolution of the A I C C. Congressmen shall take up the responsibility of administration in order to fulfil the promises made to the electorate. In office, they will go ahead with their programme of legislation for promoting the welfare of the people. Outlines of the programme are contained in the Wardha resolution of the Working Committee. Whether there will be a conflict or not, that will depend upon the governor. Should he obstruct the Ministers in their "constitutional activities," these shall have no other alternative than to lay down the responsibility of office on the ground that they are not given the power to act according to the mandate of the electorate. Having resigned, they will place the point at issue before the electorate, and ask for a verdict. A re-election will inevitably follow, and Congress candidates surely be returned with a still greater majority. Why should we not launch upon the honest and honourable course of a clear and clean fight on straight issues? What is the use of quibbling over artificially created issues which obscure the fundamental principle of our programme?

The only other alternative course will lead us to the

deep and dangerous waters of an uncharted sea. Congressmen refusing to accept office next time they will be invited, the governors shall have to choose between a new election and carrying on the entire administration on their personal responsibility. They are not very likely to make the first choice, afraid of the possibility of a still greater Congress victory at the polls. On the other hand, if they dared a new election, the Congress, thanks to its failure to act decisively on the strength of its last electoral victory, might suffer some reverse. However, it appears that imperialism has resolved to take the latter course. Should the Congressmen still insist upon some specific assurance, the governors of the provinces concerned will act under Article 98 of the Government of India act. Many Congressmen, particularly those who consider themselves to be left-wingers, would prefer that line of development. They would welcome the suspension of the constitution by the governors as a victory of the Congress policy of wrecking. But how exactly shall we be benefitted by that "victory"? Would it not be a pyrrhic victory? The end of the constitutional deadlock will find the Congress in a deadlock.

No use of deliberately creating a situation unless we are armed with a plan of action therein. What shall the Congress do when the constitution is suspended? Agitate for a new Round Table Conference in order to amend the unworkable constitution? No Congressman would advocate such a line of action. Are we prepared to

precipitate the final struggle for the capture of power by issuing the call for the election of the Constituent Assembly? Sense of reality does not permit an affirmative answer. The talk of "direct action" is idle. It is useless to talk vaguely. The nature of "direct action" suggested must be defined. None has done that yet. The negativist left-wingers toy with the idea of Civil Disobedience, of going to jail. Fortunately our movement for freedom has outgrown the stage of infantile romanticism. Not many serious-minded people would today consider voluntary imprisonment to be an effective weapon in the struggle against imperialism. The weapon has served its purpose. It has to be discarded for others more suitable to the present higher stage of our struggle—a stage in which the perspective of the capture of power has been opened up before us by the resolution of the Faizpur Congress. Besides, those who are not wedded to some hobby, but are open-minded enough to learn from experience, must admit that the tactics of Civil Disobedience can be an effective form of mass action only as the prelude to active resistance, to develop directly into an offensive. Otherwise, Civil Disobedience is bound to end in capitulation which may be justified by this or that specious argument, but inevitably produces disintegration and demoralisation of the mass movement. The present parliamentary programme, which may still degenerate into neo-constitutionalist deviation, had to be adopted in order to prevent the movement

from disintegrating in consequence of the collapse of the Civil Disobedience campaign.

However, any unprepared direct action will surely come up against the state machinery of repression, which will be altogether unrestricted when the governors will be wielding absolute power "legally" Briefly, any direct action undertaken in reply to the suspension of the constitution, will be ruthlessly suppressed. We have not created the power to resist that. Imperialism, on the other hand, is well prepared for the eventuality. As a matter of fact, it seems eager to bring about such a situation with the hope of dealing a stunning blow to the still immature, still to be organised, forces of freedom. Such being the given relation of forces, the tactics of compelling suspension of the constitution, with the forlorn hope of resorting to some sort of romantic "direct action," will be positively harmful. Let us not court disaster. Let us not be willing prey of the imperialist policy of provocation.

Once it is realised that Congressmen would accept office not as a gift of the governors, but on the authority of the electorate, we can easily give up the ill-advised demand for assurance. If it is a matter of prestige, the kind of assurance which would satisfy the present sweet reasonable mood of the Working Committee, has already been practically offered by the Secretary of State as well as by several Provincial Governors. They have told that interference with the day to day activities of the

Ministers is not contemplated in the constitution, and that governors would abide by the law. Let us take them on their word, and declare that the assurance demanded has been given. As long as the Congress stands by the Faizpur resolution, there can be no ambiguity in its attitude. We accept office with the purpose of wrecking the constitution. Imperialism may resent our policy ; but unless we foolishly play into its hands, it cannot prevent us from acting according to our policy. Zetland's Oxford speech suggests that the assurance asked by Congressmen might be given, if the Faizpur resolution is repudiated. Are we prepared to pay such a price for an assurance which is practically given by the constitution itself ? And if anything more than that is ever given, can we really rely upon it ?

We have won the elections. Let us act as victors. To accept office is our right—derived from the electorate. Let us exercise our right, with our own purpose. That is the only honourable course open to us. Travelling that way, faithful to our principles, with the determination of mobilising the forces of freedom for the inevitable struggle for the capture of power, we shall be steadily advancing towards the goal of democratic national freedom.

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## CHAPTER XII

## DEMOCRATISE THE LEADERSHIP

Centralised leadership is an essential condition for the success of a revolutionary movement. The corollary is disciplined behaviour on the part of the rank and file. The mobilised forces of national democratic revolution must be organised as an army. The army must have a general staff. Since the days of the Civil Disobedience movement, Congressmen have been accustomed to speak in military terms, war-councils, dictators etc. We have all along advocated a strong leadership, and pressed for the organisation of the anti-imperialist forces, rallying under the banner of the Congress, into a trained, well-equipped, disciplined army. But, on the other hand, internal democracy is an equally essential condition for the development and success of a revolutionary political movement. There must be centralisation of command, there must be discipline; but there must also be democracy. These are not mutually exclusive ideas. A synthesis of all these fundamental principles of organisation makes a movement unshaken in defence and irresistible in offence. Centralisation without internal democracy places the leadership beyond the influence of the rank and file. The consequence is bound to be harmful. Discipline without democracy obstructs

the expression of the will of the masses, which is the only source of strength of a revolutionary movement.

In course of struggle the Congress has created a centralised leadership That is an asset. But today our leadership is not benefitted by the intelligent cooperation of the rank and file The Congress constitution, though defective in many respects, is sufficiently democratic. It leaves the initiative with the lower organisations which, being in direct touch with the masses, can give expression to their will But unfortunately, the lower organisations do not function properly. The bulk of individual members have a false idea of leadership This defect has been brought out in the clearest relief during the present political crisis The entire responsibility for finding the way out of it, has been left with the Working Committee, nay still worse, with one single individual This is a very undesirable situation, not only for the movement, but for the leaders themselves The leaders must have the cooperation of the followers. These must learn to do their own thinking, and express their opinion boldly. The leaders, on their part, should keep their ears on the ground to detect the unexpressed or suppressed rumbling That is the only way to the rise of a collective leadership, so very necessary for the correct guidance of a mass movement.

In a few days the Working Committee will meet for taking a momentous decision which may make or mar



the future of our struggle for freedom. Should the responsibility of such a fateful decision be left entirely with a few individuals who, however astute and able, may not be infallible? Are we required to do so by any principle of discipline or code of loyalty? Political passivity is a very poor sort of discipline which rather weakens than strengthen a movement. Right kind of loyalty does not demand intellectual submission. It does not preclude freedom of thought and courage of conviction. On the contrary, to be collective, leadership must be susceptible to the influence of the judgment of the following, must be open to persuasion. But the Working Committee will have to make a fateful decision entirely on its sole responsibility, in the light of the judgment of a few individuals, and probably, of one single individual. This is an unhealthy state of affairs.

It may be argued that the Working Committee constitutes the supreme command of the Congress, and final decision rests with it. Formalistically true, this argument ignores the importance of the Congress as a whole, and is a pretext for shirking responsibility. The leaders have their responsibility. The Working Committee has its responsibility. The rank and file, in their turn, have their responsibility, but that is not only to follow blindly. Ordinary members of the Congress could not have been hibernating all these weeks and months while the country has been in the throes of a first class political crisis fraught with great revolutionary possibilities.

Not a few of them have been thinking, and have formed more or less definite opinions. There is no reason to assume that there is perfect conformity with the line followed by the Working Committee. As a matter of fact there has been much heart-searching, much doubt, much confusion, disagreement, even dissatisfaction and resentment. But all that fire remains subterranean, to be detected by whiffs of smoke here and there. The result is that in this fateful moment, our leadership is deprived of the benefit of collective judgment which alone can provide the necessary guarantee against blunder, or deviation from the path to our professed goal.

Lack of internal democracy, wrong notion about centralisation, political pusillanimity, have brought us to this perilous position. Provincial and lower organs of the Congress have acquired the slothful habit of looking up to the top for the decision of all major political questions. Instead of discussing the outstanding political issues and giving expression to the judgment of the more intelligent, more alert, more independent, more advance elements of the movement, they have chosen to mark time. The prevailing attitude is that the hands of the Working Committee should not be bound by any definite opinion expressed from below. This means that internal democracy is incompatible with the idea of centralised leadership. Some complain against the prolongation of the deadlock, that is to say, in plain language, against

helpful gesture. So let us make it easier for our leaders. Having demanded a formal assurance, they cannot very well agree to accept office unconditionally. It has become a point of honour, a matter of prestige. They know that the demand has been granted except in form. Indeed, there was nothing to grant. The assurance asked for is implicit in the Constitution which confers no real power on the ministers, but allows the ministers to carry on as long as their activities are constitutional. But our leaders are afraid that if they do not insist upon some formal concession, the followers may complain of capitulation. Promising miracle sometimes gets one into difficulty.

The difficulty would be surmounted, if the followers co-operate. The way has been shown once again by the President. Speaking at the "Zanzibar Day" meeting at Allahabad, he said that leaving aside the discussion over acceptance of ministries, the people should remember that their main object is freedom. Once we realise that, all questions of prestige and formality become of secondary importance. Anything instrumental for developing our fight for freedom should be considered proper. Under the given conditions, acceptance of office in accordance with the spirit of the Faizpur resolution is the most effective method of mobilising the masses in the anti imperialist struggle to be developed step by step to the decisive stage for the capture of power. There is no other way. The blind alley of reformism, of working the

constitution, has been scornfully rejected by the Congress. It will be dangerously premature to precipitate an open clash immediately, before we are prepared. Having regard for all these considerations, our leaders are in favour of accepting office. Let us help them in carrying out their policy. Let us be intelligent, let us be realists, let us have the courage of conviction. Let us not expect our leaders to work miracles. But let us democratise our leadership. Let us express our considered opinions in order that our movement can have a really collective leadership. Every individual Congressman agreeing with the course of action suggested by us should bring a proposition to that effect before the Committee of his place, and press for a definite recommendation, one way or the other.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### AN OPEN LETTER to MAHATMA GANDHI

My dear Gandhiji,

The Working Committee will have to make a fateful decision in its ensuing session. Its members are fully conscious of the seriousness of their responsibility and their judgment will be the result of careful consideration of the various aspects of the point at issue. Their burden will be lightened if advice and suggestions from others are placed at their disposal. They themselves are sure to be only too eager to have such co-operation from competent persons. The Congress is a democratic organisation. Its constitution makes ample room for initiative on the part of ordinary members and local committees. Unfortunately this democratic right is not properly and effectively exercised. That throws the entire burden of responsibility on the Working Committee. A great majority of the members of Provincial and District Congress Committees today are in favour of accepting office, some because of the belief that the Congress would be strengthened by whatever little the Ministers could do for the welfare of the people, others because they think that thereby the struggle against imperialism can

be developed without running the risk of an immediate clash. It is also clear that the majority of the Working Committee favours acceptance of office for one or other of the above reasons. It would be easier for the Working Committee to shoulder the great responsibility of making a momentous decision, if the Provincial and District Committees expressed their opinion previously. But this is not done on the plea that the hands of the Working Committee should not be bound. I, for one, do not approve of this attitude of political passivity. But what can individual Congressmen do in the given situation? The non-committal attitude on the part of local committees throttles their voice. Individually raised, it commands little attention, and is erroneously condemned or deprecated as a sign of indiscipline and lack of confidence in the leaders. Having a definite opinion, and believing that expression of opinion on outstanding problems is rather helpful than disrespectful for the leaders, I have made no secret of it. Now I am taking the liberty of addressing you because I know as well as every body that the Working Committee will be guided by your advice

I am decidedly of the opinion that no useful purpose would be served by working the new constitution even if the assurance demanded by you were formally given. It is an illusion that Congress Ministers would be able to do anything for the real welfare of the people. That is simply because the new constitution does not confer any

effective power on the representatives of the people. I need not argue the point. Any measure for popular welfare even such as free primary education or public health, would be opposed on the pretext of financial difficulty. Where are the Ministers going to find the money except through new taxation? And their power of levying taxes is very limited. Therefore accepting office with the purpose of doing any constructive work will discredit the Congress in the eyes of the masses, instead of enhancing its prestige.

The alternative course however, is not non-acceptance. That, in my opinion, will be equally discrediting and dangerous. It is discrediting to shirk responsibility. In the six provinces where Congressmen are in the majority, they should accept office on their own right, derived from the vote of the electorate. The governors have nothing to say about that. Having occupied their rightful place, Congressmen will act according to the programme and resolutions of the Congress. Certainly the governors cannot be expected to assure that they would not intervene when Congress Ministers should act in the only way open to them. Therefore no more assurance of non interference with "constitutional activities" of the Ministers than implied in the constitution itself, can ever be had. The avowed policy of the Congress being to wreck the new constitution, the activities of Congressmen in office can never be so innocuous as always to win the approbation of the governors. A formal assurance of

non-interference may be had only in return for the undertaking that Congressmen in office would not act according to the programme and resolutions of the Congress. That is the final offer of Lord Zetland. No Congressman can ever accept it. Therefore insistence on some formal assurance, except on the terms of imperialism, is bound to lead to non-acceptance to the obvious danger of a premature clash

I appeal to you to steer the movement clear of the dangerous course. I need not tell you what is to be done for the purpose. You are too great a man and too astute a politician to make a point of prestige. I am sure that having regard for all aspects of the situation you will come to the wisest and most honourable conclusion, and advise the Working Committee to decide in favour of accepting office, as soon as the next opportunity presents itself, with the purpose of carrying on the Congress resolution of ending the new constitution.

Under the given conditions that course alone will take us nearer to our objective. The British-made constitution, imposed on us, will be destroyed only when the Indian people will have gathered the power to assert the right of self-determination by bringing into being a Constituent Assembly. The power will be found in the revolutionary consciousness of the masses which will arm them with the determination to fight and win. This condition for the conquest of freedom will be created in course of an organised mass agitation that can be develo-



ped on the demand for legislations necessary for implementing the Congress election manifesto. The present deadlock should be ended before long so that we can go ahead with a plan of action that will necessarily create greater deadlocks and will progressively sharpen the antagonism between the oppressed and the oppressor, thereby creating the atmosphere in which the final struggle for the capture of power can be undertaken. We have marked time long enough. Advise the Working Committee to give the country a signal for fight.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### "NO LOWERING OF THE CONGRESS FLAG"

The resolution of the Working Committee opens up a new chapter in the history of our struggle for freedom. This step finally taken was predetermined by the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement and the decision to capture legislative bodies, instead of boycotting them, the result of which negative tactics was that these became subservient to the will of imperialism. Once the Con

gress decided to contest elections with the object of having majorities in legislatures, eventual acceptance of office was a foregone conclusion. There would be no sense in capturing the legislatures, unless the advantageous parliamentary position was to be utilised for the purpose of delivering more effective attacks upon the citadel of imperialism. Capture of the legislative bodies entitles the victor to penetrate the state-machinery. Under no circumstances this can ever be utilised by a revolutionary party for any constructive purpose. But acceptance of office on the strength of commanding a majority in the parliament enables the revolutionary party to dislocate the state machinery with the object of creating conditions favourable for the conquest of real, effective, political power. Parliamentary activities of the Congress were bound to be guided by this logic of revolutionary struggle. Its goal of complete independence and its programme of democratic revolution (the Karachi Resolution) ruled out the alternative policy, of co-operation with imperialism on the basis of a compromise. Having rejected the Constitution made in England the Congress could never agree to work it. Having challenged the right of the British Parliament to dictate the political destiny of India, the Congress was irrevocably committed to the policy of relentless struggle against imperialism with the object of asserting the right of the Indian people to self-determination. Consequently, the resolution of the Working Committee

is the inevitable culmination of the line of action chosen upon the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement. It is a turning point in the process of the development of our struggle for freedom because it liquidates both the conflicting schools of neo-constitutionalism and negativism which struggled for supremacy during the last three years.

Once it was clear that sooner or later the Congress would have to accept office, not as a gift of imperialism nor for co-operating with the foreign rulers of our country, but as of right derived from the electorate, there rose the question—how should the Congress act in that position of vantage? Though the answer to the question is dictated by the object pursued and programme advocated by the Congress, still neo-constitutionalist tendencies made themselves manifest and sought to influence the policy of the Congress. There were Congressmen who recommended such a line of action as would amount to working the constitution for what it was worth. They argued that Congressmen should accept office to keep out those who would act as instruments of imperialism, and utilise the opportunity to promote the welfare of the people. This argument implies that the constitution confers some power on the elected representatives of the people, and that popular welfare can be promoted within the framework of colonial slavery. It disregards the facts that the Congressmen in the Central Legislature condemned the new constitution as worse than the old, and that the

Congress as a whole has correctly characterised it as the "charter of slavery." For a time this neo-constitutionalist tendency appeared to gain ground. The Delhi resolution of the A.I.C.C. was greatly influenced by it.

The opposition to the dangerous tendency of neo-constitutionalism was ineffective because it drew inspiration from the tradition of bankrupt negativism. If the advocates of office-acceptance desired to shun the perilous path of revolutionary struggle and believed in the possibility of a peaceful transfer of power, the opposition failed to see that office could be occupied with a revolutionary purpose. Consequently it adopted the negative slogan of non-acceptance which opened up no other perspective than the very problematic revival of a form of mass movement (Civil Disobedience) whose limitations had been realised in bitter experience.

Trained in the school of non-co-operation, which in its time was certainly a revolutionary slogan, the rank and file Congressmen were mostly opposed to the new programme of parliamentary action. The slogan of non-acceptance of office therefore found favour with them. The tradition of negativism was still alive. But the victory in the elections created a new atmosphere. When Congressmen could accept office as of right, it became difficult to see how any useful purpose would be served by refusing to exercise the right. In the new situation, created by our electoral victory, to accept office would no longer necessarily imply co-operation.

with imperialism, nor compromise, much less capitulation. Consequently, the slogan of non-acceptance lost its force. Why did we work for capturing the legislatures, if we did not want to take full advantage of that strategic position? The more intelligent, the more politically-minded, section of the rank and file began to ask this question. We have scored a victory at the polls, let that victory be the prelude for greater triumphs over the forces of imperialism; let us carry the combat in the enemy's territory; let us penetrate the machinery of the imperialist state with the object of disorganising it, dislocating it. This new revolutionary perspective began to open up before the fighters for freedom. The revolutionary spirit of the Congress found a new, positive, form of expression.

The result of this new development has been the defeat of neo-constitutionalism. The alarming tendency contained in the Delhi A.I.C.C. resolution, which caused so much anxiety and confusion during these last months, has been discountenanced by the Working Committee resolution which reflects the consciously revolutionary spirit of the rank and file inspired by the perspective of new, more effective, forms of struggle against imperialism. Congressmen shall accept office, not with the hope of carrying on "constitutional activities" on the basis of a gentleman's agreement with the custodians of real power, but "for the purpose of working in accordance with the lines laid down in the Congress

election manifesto and to further in every possible way the Congress policy of combating the new Act." That is a clear and constructive lead to the country. Let us follow it, and march to victory after victory to be conquered in the course of a well-planned, organised fight involving larger and larger masses of politically educated people. Political education, requisite for effective revolutionary action, is acquired only in the school of experience. Acting on the lines of the Working Committee resolution we shall help the masses acquire political education, and thus develop the anti-imperialist struggle to a higher pitch.

The Working Committee resolution is neither a surrender nor a retreat. It is the call for a new offensive, with new strategical principles. Wisdom and realism have prevailed. Having regard for the given relation of forces, a leap in the dark has been avoided. For that good luck, the country must thank Gandhiji. Like a great man and an astute politician that he is, he has brushed aside the question of personal prestige. He frankly admitted that any assurance more than that implied in the Act itself, could not be had. But he would not insist on the point, because fully aware of the realities of the situation, he would not precipitate a premature clash. At the same time, he has realised that the clash is inevitable, and has opened before the country the perspective of a renewed struggle. He is reported to have admitted

the force of the argument that the Congress should accept office with a view to mobilising the masses. For this, it will of course be necessary to have a definite programme of action, parliamentary as well as extra parliamentary. Any determined effort on the part of Congressmen in office to introduce legislative or administrative measures for implementing the election manifesto will not be approved by the governors. So, the Working Committee resolution ends the deadlock precipitated by imperialist insolence only to bring about, "sooner than later" as Gandhiji said, a new crisis on concrete issues. Then, the initiative will be in our hands and consequently the crisis will be an impetus to the anti imperialist struggle. Early clash with the governors, resignation of Congress Ministers, new election on concrete demands of the people, that is the perspective of development in the near future. The Working Committee resolution is rightly summarised in the inspiring message of the President "No lowering of the Congress flag"

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## CHAPTER XV

### THE CONGRESS IN OFFICE.

The premature deadlock has been ended by the wise resolution of the Working Committee. In a few days there will be Congress Ministries in six provinces. There is no ambiguity about the purpose for which the Congress has decided to accept office. Yet we cannot be too zealous in keeping that purpose clear in our mind. It would be foolish to assume that there is no danger of deviation. Picked men with firm determination may be entrusted with the delicate task of penetrating the enemy's camp. But it is not a question of wilful deviation. The danger is inherent in the situation. Therefore the guarantee against it must be found. The sooner it is done the better. The surest guarantee will be found in a clear-cut programme of action. The broad outlines of the programme are already laid down in the election manifesto. The fundamental principles of action are stated in the Faizpur resolution and reaffirmed by the Working Committee. What remains to be done is to work out a concrete plan for co-ordinating the activities of Congressmen in office, in the legislatures and in the country at large. By whom is that to be done? There is some confusion on this question of the moment; and it is a delicate question.



This confusion is created by Congress legislators constituting themselves into parties. It is a bad organisational method which may have undesirable political consequences. Democratic centralisation of the leadership is the essential condition for concerted action. The method of parliamentarians constituting themselves into parties is likely, on the one hand, to disturb the unity of leadership, and, on the other hand, place the parliamentarians beyond democratic control. We do not maintain that it is bound to happen. But there is a logical connection between political tendencies and organisational methods. The adoption of the method of constituting themselves into parties testifies to the existence of an autonomous tendency on the part of the parliamentarians. The contention is that in their field of activity the parliamentarians should have freedom of action, they have been entrusted with a task, so they should be left alone to do it in their own way. This is a dangerous tendency which should be discouraged and combated if necessary. For the moment, we only sound the warning.

The Congress legislators are already members of a party. They have been elected not as individuals, but as members of a party, as advocates of a line of political action. They are not responsible *individually* to the electorate. The responsibility to the electorate is collective. The Congress is responsible. Locally, the respective Congress Committees are responsible to those whom they had persuaded to vote for the Congress candidates.

These facts are disregarded when the Congress members of any particular legislative body constitute themselves into a party. What is the necessity of adopting this organisational method ?

A political party must have a programme. As members of the Congress all the Congress parliamentarians are bound by the programme of the Congress. The new party constituted by themselves, therefore, has no right to have a different programme. But, on the other hand, the very fact of the constitution of a party means that the right is claimed. Therefore the method is fraught with danger. It implies a challenge to the authority of the Congress. The implied challenge may not affect the leadership of the Congress ; but it does dispute the principle of democratic control. If the parliamentarians are granted the right to function as autonomous groups, their action cannot be controlled by the Congress as a whole. That would be a remarkable situation. Congress members of the legislatures would be beyond the control of those who have sent them there. In that situation, what guarantee would be there for the Congress parliamentarians discharging their responsibility ? Patriotism or personal integrity need not be doubted. For that is an irrelevant matter. It is a question of the unity of purpose and organisational cohesion of the Congress as a political party. In the absence of any claim to freedom of action on the part of the parliamentarians, it would be superfluous for them to form parties

in the legislatures. Collective and coordinated action in the parliamentary field is guaranteed by the fact that they are all members of the Congress, committed to its programme and bound to act according to its resolutions. The constitution of parliamentary parties, therefore, is either superfluous or dangerous and even as a superfluity, it is fraught with danger. In order to guarantee that in office and in the legislatures, Congressmen would not deviate from the purpose for which they have been sent there, the parliamentary parties should be liquidated. There should be no parties within a party. The activities of the ministers and parliamentarians should be guided by the respective Provincial Congress Committees, according to the programme of the Congress and resolutions of the A. I. C. C. and the Working Committee. On the other hand there should be rank and file control exercised through the primary committees in direct touch with, and immediately responsible to, the electorate and the unenfranchised masses. Parliamentarians, not even the Ministers, *as such*, should have the right to frame policies. Their function is purely executive—to act under specific instructions given by competent organs of the Congress in pursuance of a democratically determined policy.

The policy of the Congress is to wreck the new constitution, not merely for the purpose of wrecking, but with the object of creating conditions favourable for

the assertion of the right of self-determination through the instrumentality of the Constituent Assembly. It is not for the parliamentarians to judge what should be done in pursuance of this policy. They must act like soldiers detailed for action on a particular front; the strategy must be determined by the high command. This, in its turn, must express the fighting will of the masses to be mobilised in militant action on the initiative of the primary committees. No programme of action can be executed unless all the different branches of Congress activity are coordinated under a centralised leadership, and the liberty of initiative is left with the primary committees functioning as organs for the expression of the will of the masses.

The step to be taken immediately in pursuance of our policy, reaffirmed by the Working Committee, is to formulate a programme of legislative and administrative measures. The Programme should be determined by the demands of the masses. It is for the primary committees to ascertain the most burning grievances of the people, the redress of which should be sought immediately either through legislation or introduction of executive or administrative measures. No other consideration should prevail with the Congressmen in office. Popular demands should be formulated in mass meetings or delegates' conferences to be organised by local Congress Committees. Concretely, measures for improving the conditions of the peasantry:

should be suggested by peasant conferences, from the village to the provincial scale. Such an organised mass movement 'will strengthen the hands of the Congress Ministers. On the one hand, the measures suggested should reflect partial demands so that they may be introduced immediately either through legislation, or administrative action. On the other hand, Ministers should not be allowed to delay action for other considerations. Legislation for the introduction of free primary education, for example, may be delayed on the ground that money for the purpose cannot be found. But to balance the budget of the imperialist state is not the concern of Congressmen. Their purpose is to show that nothing for the welfare of the people can be done under the present political regime which, therefore, should be radically changed, and the people must be prepared for the purpose. Should Congressmen in office make the mistake of acting with caution, they would discredit themselves in the eyes of the people who are expecting something concrete. They should remember the fact that they are in office, but not in power, and to shoulder the responsibility of administering the state without the requisite power is neither honourable nor practicable.

The wise course of having ended the deadlock will bear fruit, if Congressmen in office will have the courage to bring about a new deadlock on some concrete issue affecting the immediate interests of the masses. Because that will create the atmosphere for mobilising the masses

in the struggle which will eventually place popular representatives not only in office, but invest them with real power necessary for putting the Congress programme into practice. Let us utilise office as the stepping-stone to power.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### THE WORK AHEAD

ACCORDING to the instructions of the President, the Congress organisations all over the country will be holding meetings and demonstrations to-day for explaining to the masses the implications of the Congress policy in entering legislatures and accepting offices. Appropriate resolutions have been drawn up for the occasion, defining the Congress policy and demanding the restoration of civil liberties as the first step in the direction of Congress Cabinets implementing the election pledges. We have not the least doubt that the demonstrations will be a great success,

These meetings and demonstrations should mark the

beginning of a countrywide campaign for mobilising the masses behind the Congress. In its struggle against imperialism, the Congress draws its strength, as pointed out by the President, not from high offices but from the masses. The masses of India have responded to the call of the Congress. But they are yet to be organised into a disciplined army which will fight at the behest of the Congress. Persistent and consistent agitational and organisational work amongst the masses will alone give a concrete objective to their discontent and transform their vague enthusiasm into a revolutionary determination to struggle and win.

The acceptance of offices does not change the perspective of our national struggle for independence. It does not open up a new way of winning Swaraj peacefully and without a struggle. It does not dispense with the necessity of revolution and of mass action. It effects no radical change in the relation of forces or in the forms and methods of our struggle. It is merely a new tactic which has been adopted to enable us to carry our forces through certain essential preparatory stages. The fundamental nature of our struggle and of the weapons to be employed remains unchanged.

The success of the new tactic adopted by us will depend on the use that we are able to make of the offices for strengthening the Congress, for rallying under its banner larger and larger masses of people for raising our national struggle to higher level. It is with this objec-

tive that the Working Committee has directed Congressmen to accept offices.

In view of the conditions of imperialist exploitation, in view of the Congress resolutions with regard to the constitution and parliamentary activity, we cannot afford to keep before our eyes the perspective of our ministers continuing in office for years together and doing some small things for the people. Our perspective should be that of an early conflict—deadlocks on live issues, resignations, re-elections and struggle against imperialism of a more intense and more decisive character. With this perspective we cannot but utilise this short interlude of Congressmen being in offices for mobilising and organising the masses whose active sympathy and support will be our only strength in the next stage of the struggle.

The masses cannot be organised with mere vague talks about Swaraj or with pious assurances of what we will do when we get the power in our hands. Such talks and assurances leave them cold. They come to the Congress in order that the Congress may do something to relieve their present misery, in order that the Congress may lead them in their day to day struggles against oppression and exploitation. By the Election Manifesto and various resolutions passed from time to time the Congress has pledged its word to do every thing in its power to relieve the misery of the people, to reduce the rents and assessments, to give a living



wage to the workers, to expend larger sums of money on rural development, public health, education etc. It is on the basis of these vital demands, recognised by the Election Manifesto, that the masses must be organised in a solid phalanx behind the Congress to enable its Ministers to take concrete steps in the direction of enforcing these demands. It is only this strength of the people behind them that will enable the Congress Ministers to extract some concessions out of the unwilling hands of Imperialism.

Acceptance of offices has placed the Congress in a position to teach the people by their own experience that the Congress in spite of its best endeavours cannot do much for them because it lacks the state power which alone could enable it to do that. Once the people learn and imbibe in their hearts this lesson, they will not merely return Congressmen to legislatures but invest them with adequate power to so regulate the affairs of the country as would result in the evergrowing progress and prosperity of its teeming millions. They will realise that imperialism stands in the way of their progress and prosperity, and unite under the Congress banner for removing that obstacle. The next few months must be utilised by us for driving that conviction home to the minds of our people and for preparing them for a decisive struggle for power.

Acceptance of offices has not lessened but increased our burdens. It has made it more obligatory upon us

to go amongst the masses, patiently educate and organise them and prepare them for the coming struggle. Let the 1st of August be the starting point for rallying millions of our countrymen under the Congress banner, for spreading a net work of Congress Committees throughout the length and breadth of our country and for making the Congress Committees the effective instruments of the struggle for power, which will be very soon on the actual order of the day.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### A PLEA FOR PLANNED ACTIVITY

One of the fundamental weaknesses of the Congress movement during the last 18 years of its stormy career has been the lack of a definite policy—and a concrete plan of action. The Congress movement has grown from strength to strength, has drawn in larger and larger masses of people but for want of a concrete plan of action with definitely visualised steps to be taken one after the other, the movement could not make any headway towards its goal of national independence in spite

of its great actual and much greater potential strength. Instead of having a concretely formulated and resolutely pursued programme of action we relied on the impulses of movement, on the 'voice of God'—on the exigencies of the situation as the only guide to our action. The result has been a fatal drift, a general weakening, a lack of purposefulness in our national struggle.

It is high time we change this state of affairs and carry on our national struggle according to a definite plan of action leading it step by step towards the final stage of a decisive bid for power. Our struggle must be as planned, as deliberate, as purposeful as the march of an army advancing towards a definite objective. Our objective is clear—it is the winning of national independence and the establishment of a democratic state. Our army is ready—the teeming millions of India, the oppressed and exploited people of our land. What the army needs is a definite plan of campaign and a determined general staff to lead from stage to stage in defence as well as in offence, in advance as well as in retreat.

The Congress has been our leader in this our national struggle against imperialism. It has splendidly performed the tasks of agitation and propaganda. It has awakened the people from their stupor and inaction and has mobilised them under its banner. But to lead them in definitely planned actions against the citadels of imperialism, it must itself undergo a

transformation. It must cease to be a mere loose mass organisation and become a well-knit revolutionary party of the Indian people. It can no more function as a mere organ of agitation and propaganda, as a mere rallying ground for all elements dissatisfied with the present regime. It must begin to act as the organ of struggle, as the central directing body of all the anti-imperialist activities of the Indian people. It must claim and demand from the people not mere vague sympathy and allegiance but the devoted performance of certain concrete task.

To act as the revolutionary party of the Indian people, leading them in their struggle for independence, the Congress must formulate a programme of action and see that it is carried out by all its primary committees and subsidiary organisations. The activities in all the provinces and of every single committee must be controlled and regulated according to a centrally drawn up and formulated plan. Deviations to the right or the left must be scrupulously checked and all the activities must be made to flow through a common channel in order that the full force of its strength may be brought to bear on our enemies.

The acceptance of offices by the Congress has opened up the way, for penetrating yet deeper and more closer amongst the masses, for mobilising and setting them in motion for carrying the fight into the enemy's camp, for strengthening the Congress as the revolutionary party of

the Indian people. But it has also opened up the way, and much too tempting a way, for degenerating into constitutionalism, for getting lost into the wilderness of ambitious schemes—three years' or four years' plans—for improving the condition of the masses, for building up industries for effecting prohibition etc. Unless these latter tendencies which seek to reform instead of challenging and destroying the imperialist system are checked in time, there is every danger that the fundamental objective and the policy of the Congress with regard to the constitution, may be quietly forgotten and discarded as utopian and impracticable.

The objective and the policy are clearly and unmistakably laid down in the resolutions of the Faizpur Congress and of the Working Committee. They require no explanation or elaboration. What is required is a centrally formulated concrete plan of action to be rigidly followed by the Congress Cabinets in the six provinces. It is essential that the Congress Cabinets in all the provinces should follow a common line of action and march together in even steps towards the inevitable conflict with British imperialism. There is a danger of special treatment being claimed for separate provinces on grounds of special circumstances. Such claims must be resolutely put down as they result in the division and weakening of forces.

The Working Committee is meeting very soon at Wardha. We trust it will draw up such a plan of action.

The plan must specify the concrete steps which the Congress Cabinets must take in order to implement the Election Manifesto and to advance the Congress policy of combating the Act. Having thus specified the parliamentary programme, the Working Committee must at the same time prepare a plan for extra-parliamentary activity. Every Congress Committee and every Congress member must be assigned some definite tasks to be performed within a stipulated time in order that the Congress organisation may be ten times stronger than what it is today in men, money and resources. It is only by thus planning our actions in advance that we can give a successful fight to the imperialist government. We look to the Working Committee to give us that plan, to direct the Congress activities in a planned, purposeful manner.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### AGRARIAN PROBLEM

The problem that the Congress Ministers will have to face immediately is the problem of the peasants. That indeed is the central problem of the Indian National Movement. The national movement in India is the movement of the peasants who constitute an overwhelming majority of the population. The discontent of the peasants is its main motive force and the securing of their welfare its main objective. The success of the national movement depends entirely on its ability to solve the agrarian problem to the satisfaction of the peasants.

A radical solution of the agrarian problem demands a revolutionary change in the relations of property with regard to land. The property in land must be transferred from the parasitic landlords to the cultivating peasants. That is the only solution of the poverty of the peasants and of the scores of other national problems which have their roots in the abysmal poverty of our peasantry. The backwardness of agriculture, the contraction of trade, the slow growth of industries and the physical, moral and intellectual degeneration of our people, are all due to the poverty of the peasants which is the direct result

of the outdated property relations which deprive the peasants of the larger part of their produce.

These property relations are an integral part of the politico-economic system of our country. They cannot be disturbed or altered without disturbing or altering the entire system by which we are governed. They are the foundation on which is reared the whole superstructure of the imperialist rule in our country. A radical solution of the agrarian problem is therefore conditional on freedom from imperialist rule. That is the reason why the peasantry has joined the national movement and is and will continue to be the main reservoir of its strength.

The agrarian problem did not merely attract the notice of the national movement; it arrested the attention of the rulers as well. They had their eye on the problem from the very beginning and made from time to time various efforts to alleviate the problem, such as building up of a famine fund, enactment of tenancy laws, control of usury, establishment of the cooperative credit societies etc. But after 1930-31 the problem became much more acute and grave owing to the catastrophic effects of the world economic crisis. The shrewd rulers realised that a volcano was smouldering in the countryside and hastened to stifle it by additional relief measures, by campaigns of rural uplift, by remissions and suspensions etc. These measures were more palliatives. Our rulers could not go to the root of the problem and



devise a thoroughgoing remedy as, doing so would have shattered the social basis of their rule.

The national movement has not also yet thoroughly grasped the necessity of revolutionary changes in laws relating to land for solving the agrarian problem. There are still many in it who honestly and sincerely believe in effecting the welfare of the peasants by giving them subsidiary occupations, by improving their social habits, by lessening the burden of taxes and rents. Some of them imagine it to be possible to revert back to the imaginary golden age of primitive conditions where the peasants toiled in joy and contentment and the land lords protected them like their children. The rude realities of the situation, the growing experience of the peasant movement are shattering these dreams and compelling the national movement to adopt a more positive, a more realistic attitude towards the agrarian problem. The resolution of the Faizpur Congress on the agrarian problem is a big step forward in that direction. The Congress is not yet officially committed to a revolutionary solution of the agrarian problem. But it has started thinking of the peasant in terms of their daily grievances and immediate demands and has lent its powerful support to their struggle in that behalf. That in itself is a welcome move and affords a great opportunity for developing a powerful peasant movement.

Sooner or later the national movement must become conscious of its revolutionary tasks with regard to the

peasantry Its support to and active participation in the daily struggles of the peasants will drive this consciousness home to it earlier than learned discussions or futile diatribes. The national movement will rise to its real strength and become invincible only when it rallies the peasants under its banner with the electrifying slogan "land to the peasants" The Election Manifesto and the recent resolutions of the Congress have committed it to a struggle for the economic demands of the peasant Experience gathered in this struggle will push the Congress ahead and make it adopt that slogan not merely as the only solution of the agrarian problem but also as the real solution of all other national problems.

The Congress has accepted offices in six provinces Offices will not enable the Congress to solve the agrarian problem, to end the poverty and unemployment of the peasants, to quench the 'fire that is aflame' as Pandit Jawaharlal has put it A radical solution of the problem is, as we have stated earlier, conditional upon the attainment of national independence, the capture of real state-power, without which the archaic laws of property cannot be changed, the system of landlordship cannot be altered and the peasantry cannot be freed from the feudal and semifeudal conditions of its existence. But apart from this radical solution the Congress Ministers can take certain steps for granting some immediate relief to the peasants. Some relief can

be immediately granted to the peasants with regard to the crushing burdens of land—tax, rent, interest etc. Budgetary considerations cannot be allowed to stand in the way of giving this temporary relief. Reports are daily appearing in the press about the plans of Congress Ministries. Most of the reports talk of committees and commissions of enquiry which are going to be appointed. We beg to point out that committees and commissions cannot satisfy the peasants' hunger, cannot meet the immediate demands of the situation. What the peasants need immediately is some concrete relief, some actual lessening of the burden, which is crushing them out of existence. The peasants expect and demand it from the Congress Ministers.

These relief measures will rally the peasantry to the Congress in ever-increasing numbers. They will bring tons of strength to the Congress and will make it irresistible and invincible. With three hundred million peasants at its back the Congress can face and successfully challenge any power in the world, even the proud might of the great Empire over which the sun never sets.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

The Working Committee met at Wardha and dispersed. All are agreed on saying that it was the most un-eventful meeting. Various explanations are offered of this uneventful character of the meeting, of this failure to give a concrete lead. The impression which the Anglo-Indian press has carried is that the responsibilities of office weighed with the Working Committee and prevented it from indulging in the usual agitational and propagandist stuff. This is an impression which is hardly complimentary to us.

Acceptance of offices, no doubt, brings with it certain limitations and compels us to make certain modifications in our tactics and strategy and even in our modes of expression. But it cannot make us forget our essential role, which is to act as the leader and organiser of the mass struggle against imperialism. The Working Committee is not a Super-Cabinet in the sense of being subject to all the responsibilities and limitations which the Congress Cabinets in the provinces are. The Congress Cabinets in the provinces have, no doubt with the object of furthering the Congress policy and goal, undertaken the responsibility of carrying on the

administration of those provinces. The Working Committee has undertaken no such responsibility. As the supreme council of the national movement, it will guide and control the activities of the Congress Cabinets in the provinces. But considerations, administrative, budgetary, constitutional or otherwise which may weigh with a Cabinet, will not necessarily have the same weight and force with the Working Committee. Its decisions and policies should be guided by the sole consideration of the requirements of the national struggle.

In European countries we have often witnessed the sorry spectacle of great popular parties degenerating into limbs of the existing governments as a result of the party's decision to send some of its men to accept governmental responsibility. Through their small contingent detailed to do certain duties on the parliamentary front they became so much identified with the government of the day and the existing system, that they clean forgot their original function of changing that government, of subverting that system. We have no such apprehensions with regard to our National Congress. We have enough faith in the revolutionary forces involved in our struggle. We have enough faith in the revolutionary urge of the masses, which constitute the backbone of the Congress, to keep it away from that shameful degeneration. We do not suggest in the least that our leaders are treading that path. They are shrewd politicians and ardent patriots. They realise

the dangers of that position—and will try their best to keep away from it. But certain dangers are always inherent in certain tactics which have to be adopted from time to time. If those dangers are not realised in time and consciously faced, those tactics instead of strengthening our position may lead to its weakening

Acceptance of offices is a strategy which we deliberately adopted with the object of consolidating our forces for delivering in near future a smashing blow to our enemies. When we adopted it, we were conscious of its inherent dangers. But we were equally conscious of our strength and determination to overcome them. We are sure of our men, men of proved merit and unshakable honesty, who have been deputed by us to act as Ministers and we are surer of our ability to control and guide their actions.

That is the task of the Working Committee. Untrammelled by considerations of pettyfoggish administrative details, unmindful of cumbersome constitutional conventions and etiquettes, and with a broad vision embracing the whole nation and its manifold needs, the Working Committee can draw up a programme of parliamentary action to be uniformly followed in all the provinces. But this is only a part and, for the matter of that, a minor part of its task. Its main task is to draw up a programme of extra-parliamentary activities of the Congress Assembly parties. It must clearly visualise the next stages of the struggle and arrange the disposi-

tions of the national army in accordance with a prearranged plan. Planlessness, spontaneity of action, drift, muddling through, will no longer serve our purpose. Our actions cannot be mere reflex actions, determined by, and dependent upon, the onslaughts of imperialism. We must take the offensive and force imperialism to join issues with us at times and places most favourable to us. This requires a plan, a comprehensive and a detailed plan to guide, control and regulate the movements of the whole national army. It is the Working Committee's task to give us that plan.

We looked to the last meeting of the Working Committee to give us that plan. It is this expectation which compels us to view with disappointment the decisions of the last meeting of the Working Committee. There is only one resolution of a far reaching character viz, the one about the appointment of a committee of experts for undertaking a nationwide survey of national resources and collection of data for removing the manifold grievances of the people. We must confess our inability to understand the propriety of this resolution. Any 'scheme of national reconstruction and social planning of which this proposed survey is to be the basis, can be undertaken only after the capture of political power. It is futile to visualise and adumbrate such schemes before we have the power to put them into action. Not even the most blind apologist of the Reforms would suggest that we have the power under the Reforms of

undertaking any scheme of national reconstruction and social planning. That is impossible within the framework of the imperialist rule. The Working Committee can have no time for an academic discussion of such schemes. Its whole time and energy must be concentrated on schemes for the termination of the imperialist rule and its substitution by a democratic rule of the people of the land. Other resolutions, important as they are, do not touch the vital problem on which we had expected light and guidance from the Working Committee.

The last meeting of the Working Committee has no doubt given us no fresh directions. But the resolutions of the Faizpur Congress are there. They are a sure guide for our actions. They have placed before us the immediate objective of the capture of political power and shown us the only road of reaching that goal viz the road of mass action. We have entered the legislatures and accepted offices only with the object of facilitating our progress on that road and towards that objective. Let us utilise the offices and the legislatures for developing mass action. Mass action will alone save the Congress from the dangers inherent in the strategy of office acceptance and will strengthen it and keep it straight on the path of revolutionary struggle against imperialism.

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## CHAPTER XX

### THE TASK OF THE RADICALS

Acceptance of offices by the Congress has given rise to a number of new and complex problems before our national movement. We have dealt with some of them in these columns and indicated the line to be followed by the Congress organisations under the favourable circumstances created by the acceptance of offices. We propose to deal to-day with another aspect of the question viz the political, organisational and tactical problems posed before the radicals in the country by this decision of the Congress.

There is no dearth of radical elements in our country. Even within the Congress there are hundreds and hundreds of them, persons dissatisfied with the present order of things in the Congress and desirous of striking out a new path. But unfortunately both for the radicals as well as for our political movement, radicalism in our country has been identified with sterile negative criticism and condemnation of accepted programmes and policies. Because of this negative attitude the radicals have, in spite of their industry and sacrifice, always failed not only in influencing and determining the programme and policy of our national movement, but even in winning for themselves any important position in the political life

of our country. Their indulgence in mere abuse and condemnation, their theoretical extravagances and practical ineptitude, their failure to oppose an alternative programme of positive action to the programme of the leadership, have been the causes of this sad phenomenon. That is why, in spite of the courage, heroism and self sacrifice exhibited by many a radical on several occasions, they have not been able to rouse the masses and to get their support for the programmes and policies sponsored by them.

We found a tragic illustration of this attitude in the controversy that raged over the question of office—acceptance. The radical elements instinctively sensed the danger of constitutionalist tendencies gaining the upper hand by reason of acceptance of offices. But instead of suggesting a positive programme of action as a check on those tendencies, they staked their all on a negative opposition to offices. The only alternative that they suggested was a return back to the discredited path of non-co-operation. In their anxiety to guard—against constitutionalist deviations they forgot to take note of the revolutionary possibilities of offices. They could not therefore meet the right elements on their own ground by agreeing to offices but insisting on their utilisation for revolutionary purposes. The result was an abject failure.

The same tendency is in evidence after the acceptance of offices. There is a chorus of disapproval and con-

demnation of the constitutionalist tendencies exhibited by the Congress Ministers and high-placed Congress leaders and of the sins of omission and commission of the Congress Ministries. We have ourselves not been slow in drawing attention to these dangerous tendencies and in criticising the Congress Ministers for their failure to implement the Election Manifesto on a number of points. The constitutionalist tendencies are so obvious, the sins of commission and omission are so glaring that it requires little intelligence to point them out and to level criticism against them. But the important question that faces us is: How shall we check those tendencies, how shall we utilise the offices to serve our revolutionary ends? And that question does not yet seem to be tackled satisfactorily by the radicals in the country.

We are not mere critics of the Congress leaders. We are not merely his majestys' opposition to the present Congress leadership. Our task is not merely to point out the faults and defects of the Congress leaders. We propose to give an alternative leadership to the Congress. Our task is to build up a new leadership not on the basis of abuse and condemnation of the old leaders and their policies and programmes but on the basis of a new clearly formulated platform of more virile and more effective action. We shall neither serve ourselves, nor our Congress, nor our freedom movement merely by acting as the critics of the Congress Ministries. Let them

who delight in being generals without an army or in being disinterested spectators of the national movement play that role and isolate themselves on the olympian heights of 'ruthless criticism and merciless exposure.' Our place is with the masses. We have to educate them, we have to convince them and take them with us in our onslaughts against constitutionalism. We have to act as the leaders and organisers of the masses with whose support and sympathy and by the dynamic force of whose organised action we shall not merely check the constitutionalist deviations but also succeed in raising our national movement to a higher stage.

This is the task which demands our immediate attention. Acceptance of offices by the Congress has created certain very favourable conditions for our accomplishment of that task. The Government has been always antagonistic to any mass movement. Their policy has always been to suppress and discourage all activities on the part of the masses. But now at least in six provinces, we have in government men who are committed to an unequivocal support to the mass movement. Let us take advantage of this factor. Let us initiate and develop mass action taking advantage of this solemn pledge of the Congress Ministries. Let the word go round to the villages and the cities that there is now in office a government which is committed to take a kindly and sympathetic view of all mass movements and demonstrations. Let us set in motion the masses in the cities

and the villages with demands for the redress of their immediate grievances. Let us inculcate self-confidence in their minds and make them conscious of their legal and moral right to protect their persons and property against the illegal exactions of landlords, money-lenders or petty officers. This mass movement developed locally and linked up through the Congress organisations, will not weaken or embarrass the Congress Ministries. It will on the other hand strengthen their hands and enable them to extort some concessions for the people from the unwilling hands of foreign Imperialism. The concrete achievements of the Congress Ministries will serve us as a solid foundation for building up the mass movement. No Congress leader can prevent us from working on these lines. For in working on these lines we are doing nothing but implementing and fulfilling the Congress resolutions and programme.

We value the right of criticism. We have never sympathized with the utterances of certain Congress leaders suggesting a ban on all criticism of the Congress Ministries. We shall never forgo that right. Criticism is the sign of life and the main spring of progress. But we value positive criticism much more than mere destructive criticism. Positive criticism leads to rectification of mistakes, growth of consciousness and the development of the movement. *Negative criticism is sterile of all results.* And we want our radicals to be much more than critics. We want them to be revolutionary fighters, active

organisers of mass struggles, the coming leaders of our national movement. We want them therefore not merely to indulge in criticisms of the acts or omissions of the Congress Ministers. We want them to develop mass activity and to build up the mass organisation. We feel, Congressmen's being in office has given us a splendid opportunity for accomplishing those objects. We want our radicals not to lose that opportunity.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### CONGRESS AND THE FEDERATION

Discussions are in progress between the Princes and the Government of India regarding the terms and the conditions on which the former could be induced to join the Federation. The Government of India has insolently refused to throw any light on the nature or the progress of the negotiations. The adjournment motion tabled by Mr. Satyamurti to discuss the unsatisfactory nature of the Government replies was disallowed by the Governor General on the ground that it could

all public men in India to its Federation scheme. It never expected to encounter any opposition from the side of the Princes and the Chiefs. But the Indian Princes accustomed to their age-old methods of rule and administration and incapable of seeing beyond their noses, are reluctant to embark on the to them uncharted sea of the Federation. Childlike they see a ghost in every tree and apprehend a trap in every clause of the Instrument of Accession. They also sense that the entry into the Federation will mean a certain modernisation and rationalisation of their systems of administration. Conservative as they are taught to be, they shy at all new things, however immediately attractive and ultimately advantageous they may be. This is the reason of their nervousness to accept the gift that is being made to them. But imperial interests demand the inauguration of the Federation as early as possible. Imperial statesmen are therefore busy in coaxing and cajoling these shy children to accept the rights and responsibilities that are being conferred on them. The children, it seems, are proving so intractable that imperialism is being forced to agree to numerous reservations and to confer various additional privileges. That is the reason why the negotiations cannot be disclosed to public gaze.

It is gratifying to note that the Indian public opinion which was at one time sympathetic towards the Federation is steadily turning against it. The Congress

is definitely committed to an attitude of irreconcilable hostility to the Federation. The Congress President stated in a talk to the pressmen in Bombay "We shall resist it, ( the Federal Scheme ) we shall tear it, we shall burn it" These remarks are an indication of the intensity of his feelings of hostility towards the Federation. His feelings are shared by the leaders of the moderate section in the Congress. In his speech in the Madras Assembly, for the 'steady moderation' of which he received the encomiums of the leader of the European group Sir William Wright, Shri Rajagopalachari declared that the Congress was opposed to 'the grant of authority to irresponsible rulers of States to administer our affairs" Mr. Rajagopalachari as well as Pt. Jawaharlal have made it clear that the Congress is not opposed to Federation as such. That is a point which we need not discuss here. We are at present concerned with the Federation as devised by the Government of India Act, which stands condemned by the Congress and the entire progressive opinion in the country.

The question that faces us then is : how to combat the Federation. It has been suggested that it can be combated by the refusal of the Provincial Legislatures to elect their representatives to the Federal Assembly. The suggestion is of a piece with the suggestion that the Provincial Scheme could be wrecked by forcing the Governors to suspend the Constitution under sec. 93 of the Act, It has been pointed out



by authorities on constitutional law that the refusal of the Provincial Legislatures to elect their representatives will not wreck the Federal Scheme. This learned advice of constitutional experts is supported by the lesson of history that a Constitution is not a paper document which can be torn or burnt, but is the expression of the will of the dominant class which can be frustrated only by the rise of a superior power. To combat the Federation or the Act, of which it forms a part, we must effectuate the rise of that superior power in the country, of a power which can challenge the authority of British Imperialism.

In combating the Federation we must mobilise in our support the peoples of the Native States. The Congress attitude towards the Native States and the struggles of the Native States' people has been a subject of keen controversy for the last few years. Dissatisfaction with the Congress policy of non-intervention in State affairs has been growing amongst the Congress circles and has found expression in many a meeting and conference. It is high time that the Congress abandons this policy of non-intervention and pursues the policy of active participation in and support to all the struggles of the Native States people for democratic rights and for better living conditions. The agitation against the Federation can be made a point of departure for this new policy. The peoples of the Native States are as much interested in the

Federation issue as the people of British India. A tremendous mass movement can be immediately developed with a demand for the inauguration of responsible governments in the States and for the right of direct representation of the state subjects in the Federal Assembly. The Congress and the people of British India must help the subjects of Native States to challenge the self-arrogated right of their rulers to speak in their name. Neither the imperialist government nor the rulers of Native States are entitled to negotiate the terms of Federation between the different provinces and the territories under the rule of Native States. It is the people of the provinces and of the states represented by their elected delegates that can discuss and settle the terms of the Federation or of the amalgamation of various administrative units. It is essential that the Congress should develop such a movement in British India and the Native States with such a demand and such a perspective. That is the only way of combating the Federation and of foiling the nefarious object of British Imperialism of subjecting the Indian people to the rule of the Native Princes and Chiefs.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE IMMEDIATE TASK.

Both when the Congress decided to contest elections as well as when more recently it adopted the tactics of accepting offices, the Congress laid particular emphasis on extra-parliamentary activity and regarded parliamentary activity merely as a supplement to extra-parliamentary mass movement. The resolutions of the Lucknow and the Faizpur Congresses and of the A. L. C. C. and the Working Committee are very emphatic and unequivocal on the point. But ever since the acceptance of offices by the Congress a tendency is growing amongst the Congressmen of concentrating all their attention on the parliamentary activity to the neglect of the outside mass activity without which the former can have no strength and vitality. This tendency is fraught with such dangerous consequences that it behoves every Congressman to take note of it and to nip it in the bud.

Mass activity is the life-breath of the Congress. The Congress has grown to huge proportions and developed into a mighty organisation only on the basis of the activity of the masses. Subtract mass activity from the Congress and it will remain an organisation of a handful of persons, which the British Government will not either bother to suppress or to conciliate. Divorced from the

activity of the masses, it will not be long before the Congress degenerates into a Liberal Federation and forfeits its claim to speak in the name of the Indian people. Those who advise the cessation of mass activity, on the ground that Congressmen are Ministers and will look after the welfare of the masses, open up that inglorious path for the Congress. Their advice, if seriously followed, will dig the grave of the Congress, as the national movement for independence.

Congressmen's being in office is no excuse or reason for crying a halt to the activity of the masses. It should on the other hand be an incentive for redoubled mass activity. Formerly not even the slightest activity of the masses was tolerated. It used to be crushed in its initial stages by intimidation, arrests and use of force. Under the Congress Ministers a mass movement will not have to encounter these obstacles in the initial stages. Congressmen must take advantage of this favourable factor and initiate and develop mass actions on a larger and ever widening scale.

It is ludicrous to say that the activity of the masses will weaken the hands of our Ministers. Our Ministers are not the representatives of an alien government which may rightly dread the consequences of mass action. They are our representatives and as our representatives the strength, confidence and consciousness developed by us will strengthen and not weaken their hands. We develop our movement not to pull them

down but to help them to pull down the imperialist structure. That is the objective of the Congress. The objective cannot be attained by the securing of some concessions through ministerial activity, by the passing of votes of no-confidence or by constitutional deadlocks. It can be secured only by mass action. And instead of putting mass action in cold storage during the regime of Congress Ministers, we should take advantage of the favourable conditions created by it for making it more intensive and more vigorous.

There is another tendency which also must be checked. It is the tendency of running to the Ministers for every small thing. It is encouraged on the one hand by persons who are averse to mass activity and on the other by persons who have no proper perspective of the mass movement. It is humanly impossible for the Ministers to look into all the thousands of grievances of the people and to give justice. Moreover it is wrong to teach the people to look to the Ministers for every small thing. We must encourage local activity and develop the strength and the consciousness of the people. A number of local grievances can be easily remedied by the united strength and action of the people concerned. Let them by their own action and on their own strength, secure redress of their local grievances. Let them resist on the spot the forces of oppression and exploitation instead of running to the Ministers as their saviours. Let us remember that ultimately it is our own

action in the fields and factories, in villages and towns that is going to save us and not government communiques or orders issued by the Congress Ministers. This course of action will make the people self-confident and self-reliant and will transform the local Congress Committees into organs of struggle. We want the local committees to be not merely the transmitters of local petitions to the Ministers. We want them to be the organisers and the leaders of the struggles of the masses within their jurisdiction. These local struggles will convince the people of the necessity of an all-India struggle for the capture of political power—and will eventually transform the Congress into a fighting organ of the Indian people.

It is with this perspective that we must chalk out a programme of immediate action. Our Ministers are great politicians, honest and sincere patriots. But they cannot work miracles. They cannot destroy the Constitution. They cannot break the chains of slavery. That can be done only by the people of India organised in fighting units under the banner of the Congress. To achieve this end we must tackle them with their immediate grievances and organise their struggle for their redress. Let every Congress committee address itself to this task of formulating the immediate demands of the people of its locality and of organising them for the struggle required to enforce them. With these concretely formulated demands of the people and with

their organised strength at their back, let them approach the higher Congress authorities and our legislators and Ministers for immediate action thereon. This organised strength may enable our Ministers to extort some concessions for us. These concessions will bring new strength to our organisation and a new self-confidence to our people. This will enable us to develop and strengthen our Congress as the revolutionary party of the Indian people. The success of the strategy of office acceptance will depend on the amount of success achieved by us in accomplishing this task. And it can be achieved not by parliamentary debates or by ministerial firmans but by the incessant and ever growing activity of the masses taking place under the banner of the Congress.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The resolutions moved by the Congress parties in the various Legislatures rejecting the Government of India Act and demanding its replacement by a constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly have served to focus the public attention on the demand for a Constituent Assembly and the problems raised by that demand.

The resolutions had merely an agitational and propagandist value. As we pointed out last time it is regrettable that the Congress failed to reap the best possible advantage out of those resolutions by its failure to rouse the masses on that issue and to mobilise them in support of it. The resolutions ought to have been used as a lever for bringing home to the masses the crucial problem of the anti-imperialist struggle, the problem of the capture of political power.

Discussions in the Legislatures or propaganda from that platform has only a limited value. No doubt they serve to show that it is not a demand of a few agitators or of an 'irresponsible' organisation but of the Legislatures created by and functioning under the Act. Their main value lies in the fact they provide an opportunity for mobilising the masses in support of their vital demands expressed through their representatives in the Legislatures. This technique of linking parliamentary action with extra-parliamentary mass action the Congress has yet to learn and evolve. To be successful in our parliamentary struggles and to utilise them for developing our national movement we must learn and evolve that technique as early as possible.

The slogan of Constituent Assembly has now won the universal support of all anti-imperialist elements in the country. There was a time when some of the Leftist elements in the country were opposing it as a counter-revolutionary idea. After years of futile opposition and



insane propaganda against it they became aware of the revolutionary potentialities of the slogan—and withdrew their opposition. There was a time when the high-placed Congress leaders regarded it as a utopian dream—and the rank and file Congress members looked upon it in wonder and amazement. It required seven years of consistent propaganda to persuade the Congress to accept it as the central slogan, the focal point of its anti-imperialist struggle. Since 1934 it is the accepted slogan and demand of the Congress. The Congress is now pledged to the demand for a constituent Assembly, to the struggle for its convocation, to the assertion of the right of self-determination which it embodies. And yet there are men and tendencies in the Congress which seek to divert the Congress from the path of revolutionary struggle by putting misleading interpretations on the slogan of Constituent Assembly.

Constituent Assembly is the central slogan of the democratic revolution, which is on the order of the day in India. In a democratic revolution the basic political demand of the people is for the establishment of a democratic state, for the capture of state-power from the hands of an autocratic sovereign and the feudal lords whom he represents. The latter use the state power in their hands for checking the onward march of the country, for preventing the growth of the productive forces which seek to undermine their social position. The progressive forces in the country rally under the banner of popular sover-

eignty expressed through the demand for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly and oppose it to the doctrine of the divine right of kings on which is reared the whole super-structure of absolute monarchy and feudal landlordism. The Constituent Assembly of the people rises as a challenge and a rival power to the old constituted state power of the King and the barons. It is by overwhelming the old existing constituted authority that the Constituent Assembly brings into existence a new democratic state-power and inaugurates a new era of social progress. That is the historical function of a Constituent Assembly, the function of mobilising the people in a revolt against the established authority, of asserting the sovereign right of the people as against the self-arrogated authority of the kings and the barons, of bringing into existence a government of the people and by the people on the ruins of an autocratic government of a king ruling by divine authority.

In the Indian context the form and the content of the Constituent Assembly undergo certain fundamental changes owing to the inability of certain classes of our countrymen to participate in the democratic revolution. But it does not change its revolutionary character or the nature of the tasks confronting it. In India we have to challenge the self-arrogated authority of the British Parliament, the organ of British Imperialism. The autocratic state-power established here by British Imperialism is preventing the onward march of our country, is

perpetuating the social and political conditions, which are the cause of the poverty, the misery and the slow death of our people. The people who revolt against these conditions come face to face with the state-power, which is based on these conditions. They realise that the conditions cannot change unless the state-power is changed, is replaced by a new state-power representing their own will. The established state, even after the superficial changes effected in it by the Government of India Act, 1935, is the embodiment of the will of British Imperialism. There is a conflict between this will and the will of the Indian people. It is a conflict of an irreconcilable character. The demand for a Constituent Assembly represents this conflict. It is the expression of the Indian people's desire to order their affairs according to their own will, to establish in the country a state-power which will embody their will and not that of a foreign Imperialism. The demand is therefore a challenge to the authority of British Imperialism. It is a call for the creation of a rival authority, of a new state-power. It is naive therefore to suppose that such a rival authority, such a new state power can rise in the country with the permission or approval of British Imperialism. It is much more ridiculous to suppose that British Imperialism will convoke the Constituent Assembly and bring into existence a power embodying the will of the Indian people. A Constituent Assembly has always arisen in opposition to and as a rival to the established

state-power. In India it will not take a different course.

By accepting the slogan of a Constituent Assembly the Congress has denied the right of the British Parliament and asserted the sovereign right of the Indian people to determine their own constitution. It has once and for all turned its back on the path of a compromise or an understanding with British Imperialism. The question that faces the Congress now is : how to assert that right in actual practice, how to make the convocation of a Constituent Assembly a question of practical politics. The Constituent Assembly is not merely a slogan of agitation and propaganda. It is high time we devise ways and means for making it a slogan of action.

If we propose to make the Constituent Assembly a question of practical politics within the next few years, if we intend to place the question of capture of political power on the order of the day at an early date, we have no other alternative but to advance with the perspective of transforming the Congress into the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly does not drop from the heavens. It arises as a culminating point of a series of partial and preparatory struggles. To be victorious in the struggle against the established authority it must have behind it the solid backing of the people, organised in fighting units and trained in courage and discipline as a result of the preliminary struggles waged by them. It is only when the Constituent Assembly will rise out of

the daily struggles of the people that it will possess the strength and the vitality to storm the citadels of Imperialism. If the Congress has participated in all these struggles, if the local Congress Committees have throughout functioned as organs of these struggles, there is no reason why at the proper time the Congress representing the overwhelming majority of the people of India, elected by them and owing their allegiance, cannot be transformed into the Constituent Assembly of the Indian people. That is the shortest way of reaching our goal, of being in a position to convoke the Constituent Assembly. But that demands a radical transformation in the structure and the character of the Congress. Today it is more a loose mass movement than a disciplined organisation of the masses. It must be transformed into the revolutionary party of the Indian people, the effective organ of their anti-imperialist struggle. Then only will it be able to perform its task of leading the anti-imperialist struggle to victory and of eventually transforming itself into a Constituent Assembly. Our efforts for making the Constituent Assembly a question of practical politics are thus linked up with our efforts for the democratisation and the activation of the Congress.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### CONSULT THE PEOPLE

The A. I. C. C is meeting at Calcutta towards the end of this month. It ought to review the activities of the Congress Ministries and lay down the lines on which they should work thereafter. To aid the A. I. C. C to arrive at a correct decision regarding the line of action to be followed by the Congress Ministries, it is necessary that the rank and file Congressmen and the lower Congress Committees should devote their attention to this problem and express their views thereon.

The Congress Ministries have been in office only for three months. During this time they have endeavoured to secure some relief for the masses. The Congress Ministries had very little time at their disposal for framing their Budgets. They could not introduce any spectacular changes in their Budgets over the Budgets of their predecessors. Still it must be said to their credit that they succeeded in giving some remissions in land revenue and some other concessions like the abolition of grazing fees etc and in budgetting for the expenditure of larger amounts on nation-building departments. In U. P. and Bihar the Congress Ministries are attempting to give relief to the peasants by the

enactment of the Tenancy Amendment Acts. Then there is the programme of prohibition which has been enthusiastically taken in hand by most of the Congress Ministries. But then there are a number of things which the Congress Ministries could have done even within the frame-work of the Act, and have not done. Notably in the sphere of civil liberties much yet remains to be done. In granting relief to the masses too the actions of the Congress Ministries in some of the provinces have been far from satisfactory. But it is yet too early to judge. They have been in office only for a very short time. They must have a fair amount of time for putting the Congress programme into action before a judgment can be passed on their policy as a whole.

We insist upon a strict adherence to the Congress programme. We are afraid a tendency is growing in the ministerial circles of losing sight of the fundamentals of the Congress programme and policy. According to the Congress resolutions, offices have been accepted to combat the Act and to intensify the struggle against Imperialism. Offices are not to be utilised for working the Act for securing some small concessions for the masses. But a tendency has been growing to forget the main objective of the Congress and to concentrate all attention on the measures for securing some temporary relief for the people. The masses do need immediate relief and the measures for securing that are necessary; but that cannot be done at the cost of postponing the national struggle of

forgetting the main demand of our national movement. The Congress is convinced that the poverty and the misery of the people cannot be ended without the destruction of imperialism. The Congress policy therefore is to work for the destruction of imperialism and not merely for the securing of some concessions within the framework of imperialism. It will be therefore contrary to the Congress policy for the Congress Ministries to reconcile themselves to the Act, to the colonial slavery of the Indian masses and to work only for a few relief measures within the four corners of the Act. The A. I. C. C. must take notice of this tendency which, we are constrained to say, is growing at an alarming rate in the ministerial circles, and put it down with a strong hand.

Without forgetting for a moment the Congress objective and the Congress policy of wrecking the Act, the Ministers must ceaselessly work for the amelioration of the condition of the masses. If they work with the idea of ameliorating the condition of the masses only within the framework of the Act, they will not be able to achieve anything. The spectre of budgetary deficits and Governor's special powers and responsibilities will be powerful enough to terrorise them and to drive them into the safe harbour of the status quo. Without upsetting the status quo they cannot grant any relief to the masses. Relief to the masses is the important thing and not the balancing of the imperialist budget.



or the protection of the vested interests of the exploiters. The demand for relief will no doubt lead to the upsetting of financial equilibrium, to the destruction of certain vested interests, to the disorganisation of the imperialist machinery. These will pave the way for the final struggle for power. Our Ministers are in office not to bolster up the tottering imperialist structure but to undermine it more and more by vigorous measures for the relief of the masses. Concentration on mere relief measures to be secured by working the Act, leads to a side-tracking and disorganisation of the national struggle, while actual relief secured to the masses irrespective of budgetary and other considerations will on the one hand weaken the imperialist stranglehold and on the other hand infuse strength and confidence in the masses and thus develop the national movement.

The Congress Election Manifesto has enumerated a number of relief measures which the Congress Ministries are pledged to work for. Obviously it is not possible to take immediate action on all the points enumerated in the Manifesto. A beginning must be made with some of them. The Congress Ministries have on their own initiative made a beginning with some. This, we feel, is a wrong procedure. Relief is to be given to the people. Let the people therefore say what are their burning grievances and on what points they require immediate relief. Let the people themselves decide the point instead of any one else doing it for them. It will be

helpful therefore, if the primary Congress Committees are directed to initiate a mass campaign for ascertaining the wishes of the people. Once the wishes of the people are ascertained, a concrete plan of ministerial action on that basis can be easily chalked out and parliamentary struggle on a uniform line can be developed throughout the country.

Our Ministers and our Legislators are a section of our national army. They are sent to the Cabinets and the Legislatures with a definite object. They must be given a plan of action for their work in the Cabinets and legislatures. The task of putting it into action is entrusted to them. But the plan itself must be prepared by the national movement as a whole. The A. I. C. C. is the supreme body of our national movement. It is its task to formulate the plan\* of our parliamentary action after consulting the rank and file and the lower organs of the movement. The A. I. C. C. meeting at Calcutta is faced with this task. We hope and trust it will perform it successfully. We urge upon Congress men and organisations to place at its disposal the material necessary for arriving at a correct decision.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### POLITICAL PRISONERS

"Touched by nation wide appeal and your message, we suspend hunger-strike on the assurance that the whole country has taken up our demands and our cause. We are confidently hoping that within a reasonable period of time you will succeed in getting all our demands fulfilled."

This was the reply from the political prisoners in the Andamans to the appeal made by the Working Committee and by Gandhiji personally, advising them "to abandon the strike relying upon all trying our best to secure relief for you." Gandhiji further telegraphed "It would be graceful on your part to yield to the nation-wide request. You will help me personally if I could get an assurance that those who believed in terrorist methods no longer believe in them."

More than a month has passed since the political prisoners in the Andamans gave up their hunger-strike hoping that a nation wide campaign for their release would be vigorously conducted until their unconditional release was secured. By adopting the desperate method of hunger-strike, they succeeded in placing the issue of the release of political prisoners in the forefront of our

struggle for freedom. They have given up the hunger-strike, but the issue still stands before us to be tackled. Some of them have been granted a little relief by transfer to Indian jails. But that is no relief,—very poor consolation for those who have been imprisoned for many a year and even now are not at all sure of early release. Yet there appears to be some complacency about this burning question. But let us not shirk our responsibility on the convenient argument that something has been done. Let us not forget that the political prisoners have taken us on our words. They complied with the condition made by Gandhiji. In reply to his telegram they declare: "Those of us who ever believed in terrorism do not hold to it any more and are convinced of its futility as a political weapon or creed. We declare that it definitely retards rather than advances the cause of our country."

No more could be expected of them. Most of them were not sentenced for committing any particular act. They are kept in detention on the suspicion of sympathy for a connection with the so-called terrorist movement. (Let it be mentioned that we for ourselves believe that "terrorist," is a malicious and mendacious misnomer for a revolutionary movement.) However, they have disowned any such connection or sympathy. That should be enough for securing their release. Gandhiji himself was satisfied. In a public statement issued on September 1st, he said: "In view of the prisoners' noble response to my

appeal for a declaration of their present attitude on terrorist methods, let us hope that all of them will be unconditionally discharged. I have appealed to proper quarters for relief in which I am sure the whole country will join."

The hope has not been fulfilled. Shall we be hoping against hope, and no more? Is the responsibility of the whole country, of the Congress and of Mahatmaji personally, discharged by simply appealing to proper quarters for relief? We ask this question only to remind the Congress of the responsibility it has undertaken. The responsibility is to secure unconditional release of all political prisoners. It may be argued that full consciousness of the responsibility does not enable the Congress to discharge it. But instead of making a virtue of our impotence, we should act to the best of our ability. Unfortunately, that is not done. On the one hand, the mass agitation inaugurated while the prisoners were on strike, has subsided. This would not have happened, had the entire machinery of the Congress throughout the country been set in motion for that purpose. Public feeling was very high when hundreds of precious lives were in danger. That psychological moment should have been fully utilised for developing a powerful mass movement which could not possibly be resisted. Imperialist stubbornness would have broken down. Bureaucratic prestige would have given way to reasonableness. What the spontaneous mass agitation was allowed to subside,

action on the part of Congress Ministers and Legislators was circumscribed by bureaucratic consideration. It is said that in seven provinces Congressmen are *in power*. Why did not they utilise this power to secure the release of the political prisoners—to enable the Congress and its accredited leader Gandhiji to discharge the moral responsibility publicly and ceremoniously undertaken? Congress Ministers and Legislators allowed themselves to be quietened by the bureaucratic argument that provincial governments could do nothing in cases which required a decision of the central government. They squared their conscience and left the victims of imperialist terror to the mercy of their callous captors

Release of political prisoners is regarded as a problem exclusively for Bengal to solve. Practically all the prisoners detained without trial are Bengalees. But in Bengal Congressmen are not in office. This fact is providing Congress Ministers in other provinces a comfortable pretext for their inaction. We spare no words in condemning the attitude of the Government of Bengal. The attitude is indefensible. But why do we not demand some decisive action on the part of Congressmen where they are in office? Of course, an order of the Congress Cabinet of Madras or Bombay would not compel the release of political prisoners in Bengal. But the bureaucratic machinery of the imperialist State is not the only instrument in the hands of those who are expected to act as representatives of a great popular

movement. Congress Ministers in other provinces could compel the release of political prisoners in Bengal if they would.

By the Election Manifesto of the Congress, they are pledged to secure the release of all political prisoners. What would happen if the Congress Ministries in seven provinces demanded the release of political prisoners on the threat of resignation? It would be perfectly justifiable for them to do so. And if they acted that way, the demand would be enforced unless Imperialism would risk precipitating a crisis in seven provinces. But it is precisely the spectre of the crisis that paralyzes our Ministers and reduces the release of political prisoners to a pious hope.

The attitude of the Congress leadership towards political prisoners sentenced for or suspected of "terrorism" has all along been step-motherly. Even to-day it is not quite otherwise. This is a disagreeable fact, but it is true nevertheless. It is evidenced by Gaudhiji's making a condition while promising to work for their release. This step-motherly attitude cuts both ways. Assuming that the prisoners were responsible for some reprehensible acts or sympathized with their commission, this attitude implies justification of the punishment given to them. It is very difficult to combine sympathy and condemnation. Therefore a condition for such an energetic action on the part of the Congress as will secure the release of political prisoners is that our leaders should cease sitting

in judgment As fighters for freedom, we cannot but regard all the victims of imperialist terror as comrades in distress, who deserve our unconditional support and sincere admiration. Fortunately, the rank and file of the Congress do not share the attitude of some of our leaders. And therefore it is the action of the rank and file which will eventually rescue the brave fighters for freedom from the cruel clutches of imperialist terror, and absolve the Congress as a whole from the moral responsibility it has publicly under-taken through its accredited leaders, by advising the political prisoners to throw away the only weapon they have at their disposal

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## CHAPTER XXVI

### RESPONSIBILITY

There is a rumour that, on his release after long in carceration, a veteran fighter for national freedom, whose sacrifice and suffering for the cause are no less than of anybody, made a number of public speeches. He was sent for by the Congressman at the head of the Provincial Government who asked him to abstain from making such speeches otherwise the Government would be compelled to order his arrest for sedition. We do not know how much truth there is behind this rumour. Perhaps the rumour is utterly groundless. But the fact that one hears such rumours, is sufficiently alarming. Then, more than one Congress Minister have made public pronouncements to the effect that offences against the State would not be tolerated even by those who have accepted office in pursuance of the programme of the political party of the Indian people, the declared object of which is to destroy the established Imperialist State. It can not be too often pointed out that the Congress programme of complete independence is utterly meaningless unless it signifies the determination to revolt against the established Imperialist State.

Hardly a day passes without our hearing such fami

liar utterances as "Law and Order must be maintained," "Licence cannot be tolerated as freedom," "The Government must govern," "Subversive activities cannot be permitted," "The preaching of class hatred must be punished," so on and so forth. We in India are familiar with these ominous pronouncements made by the avowed defenders of the imperialist domination of the Indian people. But it is painful to hear Congressmen in office repeating them. We wonder if they realise the implication of what they say. We cannot believe that immediately upon assuming the responsibility of office, avowed enemies of Imperialism have become conscious defenders of the imperialist State. But the curious phenomenon must be explained. And the explanation is found in a mistaken sense of responsibility.

To whom are the Congress Ministers responsible? One should think that this is a superfluous question. In office, Congressmen do not cease to be Congressmen. Their first loyalty is to the Congress. They have accepted office as representatives of the Indian people. Consequently they are responsible to the Congress, and ultimately to the Indian people. But it seems that the Congress Ministers labour under a mistaken notion of their duty. They seem to believe that, as Ministers, they are primarily responsible to the British Crown, the supreme Sovereignty of which is the fundamental principle of the Government of India Act. If they did not labour under this mistaken notion of ministerial

responsibility, they could not possibly repeat the utterances made familiar to us by avowed defenders of Imperialism

An event which is agitating the public to-day illustrates how, labouring under a wrong sense of responsibility, Congressmen in office are drifting into dangerous waters. Recently a Socialist has been arrested and put on trial under Sec. 124 A I. P. O. Now, no proceeding under this Section can be undertaken except with the sanction of the Government. The province in which this event has taken place, is to-day governed by a Congress Ministry. Having regard for the fact that the Government of India Act places the Ministers in the utterly helpless position, in cases of conflict with the Special Branch of the C. I. D., we can easily imagine that the sanction for the prosecution was not voluntarily given by the Government concerned. But that does not obviate all our misgivings. Assuming that the Minister concerned (and in this case, it is the Prime Minister himself) was browbeaten by the U. I. D., undoubtedly backed up by the Governor it was an occasion when the Ministry as a whole should have resigned, refusing to be in the undignified humiliating and dishonourable position of shouldering responsibility without power.

But we need not argue on an assumption. Since the Ministry concerned has not taken the public into confidence, the latter is perfectly justified in believing

that the responsibility of the event belongs to it. As a matter of fact, the Ministry has owned it. Though the Prime Minister, usually so vocal, has chosen to keep quiet, one of his colleagues has defended the action publicly. The defence is purely juristical. He argued that if the person under trial has not violated the law, he will be acquitted by the court. But the principle involved is not a matter of legal formality. It is political. The ministerial argument is based on the acceptance of the legal validity of the law which is notorious for depriving the Indian people of all freedom of speech.

The Sec. 124-A, I P C. imposes heavy penalty on all attempts "to excite disaffection towards His Majesty or the Government established by law in British India". In other words, it denies "the sacred right of revolt", of an oppressed people,—a right which constitutes the fundamental principle of the democratic political thought and, indeed, of modern jurisprudence. It is a law made with the sole and express purpose of suppressing all efforts on the part of the Indian people to express their antagonism towards a system of Government established by force and maintained by force. If disaffection against a foreign King is punishable, and Congressmen consider themselves responsible to suppress this disaffection simply because they are in office, it is time that the Congress revises its whole policy and repudiates the history of its recent past. If we admit that the present Government of

India is established by law, our struggle for freedom becomes meaningless. Yet, Ministers acting in the name of the Congress, have voluntarily undertaken the responsibility of enforcing this law

This is a very serious matter. In office, the Congress men, at least those concerned with this and similar cases, notwithstanding all their efforts to introduce petty reforms and to give miserly and doubtful relief to the poor, fundamentally are acting Ministers of His Britannic Majesty. Can responsibility to the British Crown be combined with loyalty to the Congress? Can the programme of the Congress be carried out by those who are so eager to discharge their responsibility as administrators of the imperialist State? Is it possible to promote the welfare of the Indian people by efficiently administering the affairs of the imperialist State? Is it a matter of pride that within a short time Congressmen have demonstrated that they can govern as well as others, as Mr Satyamurty announced at Nagpur the other day?

These are very serious questions. They should not be overlooked for the consideration of minor achievements of doubtful value. We are not accusing anybody. We are simply pointing out the danger involved in the present position. The Congress is a political organisation. Its object is political. To-day it is in the danger of drifting away from the path to its professed goal because non-political matters have been interjected into the scheme of its activity. In order to remain true to

its ideal, in order to serve as the instrument for conquering political freedom for the Indian people, the Congress must be clear about the nature of the task it has undertaken. Non-political ideals introduced into the scheme of Congress activity may be realised through a better administration of the imperialist State. Even that is doubtful. But the fundamental ideal of the Congress is political. Complete independence means nothing less than the replacement of the existing State by a democratic State, the substitution of the established system of law, made with the sole purpose of guaranteeing the colonial exploitation of our country, by a system of law made by the people themselves who are to obey those laws. This ideal will never be realised if we fall victims to the dangerous illusion that the imperialist State machinery can ever be an instrument in our hand, or that an instrument of coercion can become a beneficial agency. Magic has no place in politics.

Let not our Ministers appear as the defenders of the imperialist State. Let them not assume the responsibility of compelling the Indian people to obey laws which were not made with their consent. The moral foundation of any law is that it is made with the consent of those who are expected to obey it. This is the basic principle of representative government and modern jurisprudence. First let us conquer the right to make our own laws, then it will be time for those entrusted with the government of the country to govern. Until

then, the task of every Congressman, be he a Minister or a Legislator, or a man in the street, is to assert the sacred right of revolt against a system which exploits, oppresses and enslaves the people of our country. Let us remember the historic speech of Gandhiji when he was condemned under Sec. 124-A, I P O. Are the Congressmen in office going to justify the imprisonment of Gandhiji fifteen years after that outrage was committed?

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### A FATEFUL MEETING

Three months ago, the Working Committee made a daring but dangerous decision. In a few days, the All India Congress Committee will meet to endorse that decision. The decision of the Working Committee to accept office was taken in pursuance of the resolution of the A. I. C. C. passed at Delhi. So, the supreme authority of our movement stands committed to a policy put into practice by its executive organ. But that certainly does not deprive the A. I. C. C. of the right of control, and revision if necessary. We hope it will know how to exercise the right which it derives from the rank and file of the movement.

We do not know what will be the nature of the resolution which the Working Committee will place before the A. I. C. C. It is a bad practice not to let the membership have the opportunity of expressing carefully considered, intelligent opinion on matters of grave importance. The present practice does not allow the members of the A. I. C. C. to express collective opinion of their constituencies. The opinion they express, is individual. And even that has to be very hastily formed and rather perfunctorily expressed. The established procedure necessarily divorces the leadership from the rank and file. Resolutions passed and policies framed under such conditions, therefore, do not always reflect the will and the sentiment of the rank and file.

The A. I. C. C. will not be asked simply to endorse the resolution of its Working Committee. Just to perform that formality, it would be hardly necessary to call it in session. It will have to do something more serious. It will be asked to make a fateful decision. There is sufficient reason to assume that the Working Committee will recommend a resolution approving of what the Congressmen in office have hitherto done and authorising them to carry on in the same way. Such resolution should not be passed before ministerial activities had been subjected to a critical review. We are sure that critical voices will be raised. But we are doubtful if they will be able to influence the decision.

However, we must draw the attention of the A. I.



A. C. to the fact that there is growing discontent in our ranks. Unfortunate pronouncements by some Congressmen in office have created grave misgivings. Ministerial activities have not given general satisfaction. The achievements of Congressmen in office have fallen far below the expectation. Of course, on the latter two points it is too early to pass any judgement. At any rate that is and will be the main argument against critics. There is some force in the argument. But the pronouncements made by some of the ministers are there, and they indicate the policy which the Congressmen in office propose to follow. So, the A. I. C. C. shall have to judge whether the policy practically inaugurated by the Congressmen in office follows from the resolution adopted by it at Delhi. That is the point of view from which the situation created by the acceptance of office has to be reviewed.

Our attention, however, should be focussed on the future. Complaint against what the ministers have done or failed to do, will not take us very far. The object of all criticism or complaint, which is undoubtedly warranted and necessary, shall be to press the demand for a definite plan of parliamentary action strictly in pursuance of the Congress Resolution. The other demand is for effective control of ministerial activities. The A. I. C. C. alone has this right of control. Under no circumstances should this right be delegated. The required plan of action should be framed in the light of intelligently and democratically expressed opinion of the rank and

file. Initiative must rest with the primary Congress Committees; leadership will consist of activating them so that they can exercise the right of initiative.

The draft has been published of a resolution which will be moved by a private member. The correct procedure for framing the all-important plan of action is outlined therein. Not knowing whether a similar proposal will be contained in the resolution recommended by the Working Committee, we extend our support to this private resolution and hope that it will secure the approval of all who are eager to find effective guarantee against the danger of deviation from the path to our professed goal.

Apart from this central problem, the A. I. C. C. shall have to face other problems also of great political importance. One of these problems has risen from the session of the Muslim League. All we have to say here is that this problem must be boldly faced. In our opinion, the proper approach to this problem will be for the Congress to welcome the new development in the Muslim League and to declare unambiguously its acceptance of the principle of protection for minorities and to express its readiness to incorporate this principle in the Constitution to be framed by the Constituent Assembly.

The question of Congress attitude towards the States also should be answered clearly. The policy of non-intervention should be given up. Active support of the demand of the states people for representative and

responsible government will be one of the effective methods of combatting the Federation.

Among other things, to devise ways and means for wrecking the federal part of the new constitution, will be the task of the A. I. C. C. In our opinion, the accomplishment of that task is conditional upon our ability of wrecking the part of the Constitution already imposed on us. Therefore, if we really want to wreck the Federal Constitution, let us seriously set about the task of wrecking this fake provincial autonomy. But we shall not be able to do so, if the A. I. C. C. fails to repudiate the neo-constitutionalist theory that the best way of wrecking the Constitution is to work it.

Finally, the A. I. C. C. should not forget the political prisoners. A few of them only have been released in provinces where Congressmen are in office. But even there some still remain in jail. But through Gandhi the Congress has assumed the responsibility of securing the release of the hundreds who are still rotting in the jails of Bengal, either convicted or detained without trial. If we want to wreck the constitution in pursuance of the repeatedly declared policy of the Congress, then acceptance of office would be utilised solely for the purpose of making government under the new constitution impossible. The demand for unconditional release of all political prisoners is a first class popular issue on which a crisis can be precipitated as the beginning of a new stage of mass struggle against Imperialism.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### PROGRAMME VERSUS CREED.

The powerful opposition to Congressmen accepting office under the new Constitution was very largely based on the fear that the policy would lead to reformism. The leader of the opposition, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, repeatedly said that the revolutionary spirit gaining ground in the country will be dampened if Congressmen accepted office. After three months of the new experience, the dreaded-drift towards reformism has become so pronounced as demands serious thinking on the part of those who wish to arrest it

How is it possible that in the short time of three months the cherished ideal of complete independence is practically thrown overboard by those who, for the last two decades, stood at the head of a revolutionary movement? People with a firm revolutionary conviction do not become frank reformists as soon as they step into office. If, with all its subversive programme and revolutionary resolutions, and after years of militant mass struggle, the Congress to-day is relapsing into reformism, the cause for this deplorable development is to be sought not in the policy of office-acceptance; it is to be found in the ambiguous nature of its programme and in its ideology summarized in the creed. Indeed, office-acceptance logically followed from previous action undertaken,

if not strictly according to the programme, certainly in pursuance of the creed.

The Civil Disobedience movement was abandoned because experience had demonstrated that it could not be kept strictly within the limits of non-violence. Abandoning, practically for good, the stormy course of mass action which the Congress had steered for nearly fifteen years, it had no other alternative but to fall back on parliamentarism which it had rejected under the leadership of Gandhiji. Once that was done, the future course of action was pre-determined. Parliamentary activity undertaken not as auxiliary to, and with the conscious purpose of developing the revolutionary mass movement, was bound to end in office-acceptance and neo-constitutionalism. It should be remembered that the advocates of parliamentarism did not try to conceal the perspective opened up by the new policy. Gandhiji himself declared already in 1934 that parliamentary mentality had come to stay. And what is parliamentary mentality? It is constitutionalism. It is the policy of bringing about certain changes of existing conditions through the machinery of the established State.

Was this radical change in the orientation of the Congress, compatible with its declared goal of complete independence and the professed programme of freeing the masses of our country from the evils of native reaction and the ravages of foreign exploitation? The new policy visualised the possibility of improving the con-

ditions of the masses with the aid and co-operation of those responsible for having created those conditions. That is reformism. So it is not to-day, after three months in office, that the present leadership of the Congress has suddenly developed reformist deviations. It shunned the path of revolution in favour of reformism already in 1934, honestly believing that the professed goal could be reached more safely by the new way. And then again, the change was not sudden. It took place in consequence of a firm and fanatic adherence to the creed. Therefore, the question that confronts us to-day, in the midst of this disquieting situation, is : how was it possible that loyalty to the creed should compel us to abandon our programme all but in words ? This is a very serious question, and the future of our struggle for freedom depends on our ability to find the answer to it.

While our entire political life is confused and vitiated by the contradiction between the professed creed and proclaimed programme of the Congress, our attention to-day is riveted on matters of detail and superficial deviations. We shall never be able to prove that Congressmen in office are not acting according to the purpose with which they were sent there, so long as they will be able to fall back upon the creed and do so with the supreme authority of Gandhiji.

This fundamental contradiction of our movement has stood out in all its crassness in course of the recent con-

troverſy regarding the releaſe of political priſoners and over the action of the Congreſs Governments in certain provinces ſanctioning new political proſecutions. The Miniſters have come forward with their apologia. But the iſſue has been brought to a head by Gandhiji's article on Civil Liberties.

He has expreſſed views which are poſitively alarming. But from his well known convictions, he has not ſaid anything new. Whatever he has ſaid, reſults logically from his ethical doctrines which have been accepted by the Congreſs as its creed. He clearly viſualiſes that on this vital iſſue, the Congreſs is heading towards a criſis. Having argued that practice of the "virtue of non-violence and the ſincerity of their conviction about it" will enable Congreſſmen in office to transform the Government of India Act into an inſtrument for the liberation of the people of India, Gandhiji writes: "If the Congreſs has not impregnated the people with the ſpirit of non violence, it has become a minority, and will alter its creed." This is an honeſt and frank admission that, ultimately, the Congreſs may find it neceſſary to reconsider its creed, ſhould it be convinced of the futility of the preſent policy of conſtitutionaliſt reformiſm.

Of courſe, in the paſſage quoted above, Gandhiji's logic is not quite eaſy to graſp. The aſſertion that the Congreſs has become a minority is not borne out by facts. In ſix provinces, as far as they are repreſented by the electorate created by the Government of India

Act, the Congress represents the majority. So, the condition stipulated by Gandhiji is created there. Is Swaraj, then, realised in those provinces? Gandhiji's answer seems to be in the affirmative.

In order to establish his amazing doctrine that "Civil Liberty is not Criminal Liberty", and for justifying the generally resented action of some Ministers, he writes: "When law and order are under popular control, the ministers in charge of the department cannot hold the portfolio for a day, if they act against the popular will. It is true that the assemblies are not sufficiently representative of the whole people. Nevertheless, the suffrage is wide enough to make it representative of the Nation in matters of law and order. In seven provinces the Congress rules. It seems to be assumed by some persons that, in these provinces at least, individuals can say and do what they like. But so far as I know the Congress mind, it will not tolerate any such licence." This amazing view of the situation identifies Congress Ministries with the Imperialist State. It is clean forgotten that Congressmen were sent to office not to administer the imperialist State, but to dislocate it from within. The idea that Congress Ministers are morally bound to enforce law and order in obedience to "popular will", is not only sophistic, but is clearly contradictory to the social-revolutionary principles that the Congress, under Gandhiji's leadership, has on many occasions incorporated in its resolutions.



But Gandhiji's position is very clear. He says that the Congress must act as it is acting unless it is prepared to alter its creed. So, the alternative before the Congress is clear enough. Choose between the creed and the programme. If the programme is so impractical as cannot be harmonized with the creed, it must go. And that is the consideration which has driven the Congress to its present position where it is threatened with the perspective of getting lost in neo-constitutionalist reformism.

Let us remember that the Congress has never committed itself to any other kind of complete independence than can possibly be attained through "legitimate and peaceful" means. If we remain satisfied with this impractical ideal, we have no business to be dissatisfied with what our leaders are doing to-day. The charge that they are violating the Congress programme, does not lay against them. The fundamental political demand of the Congress as incorporated in the Lahore resolution and generally known as its creed, not only permits the recently chosen policy of constitutionalist co-operation, but indeed precludes any other line of action.

That is the reality of the situation. There is no use of complaining against the logical consequences unless we are prepared to challenge the validity of the fundamental premises. The only way out of the vicious circle is to clear away the contradiction between the programme and the creed. Eventually, one must go. Either let not our struggle for national liberation be circum-

cribed by irrelevant ethical considerations and let us have the courage to scrap the creed in favour of the resolution of the Faizpur Congress ; or let us be honest, and declare that we are prepared to do without national liberation for the sake of loyalty to an ethical principle.

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## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE PERSPECTIVE

We characterised the Calcutta meeting of the A. I. C. C. as a fateful event. Every meeting of the All-India Congress Committee is fateful. It takes place only a few times a year, between two sessions of the Congress as the supreme political organ of our struggle for freedom with the object of discussing and deciding questions of grave importance. One meeting becomes more important than the other only when it is called upon not only to make important resolutions, but to lay down some plan of action in pursuance of some resolutions. The last meeting of the A. I. C. C. was more fateful than others of recent time, because of the task of planning action rather than passing resolutions. Unfortunately, it has

simply put off the task, to be accomplished by its Working Committee.

This is a dangerous decision. It creates a precedence which will do no good to our movement. In order to drive this point home, it is necessary to remind our leaders that the All India Congress Committee is not subservient, but superior to the Working Committee. The latter is an executive organ. It is the Working Committee (that is to say, the Executive Committee) of the All India Congress Committee, in which the supreme political leadership of the entire movement is vested between two sessions of the Congress itself. This being the relation between the two Committees, (and this relation is established by the present Constitution of the Congress) the precedence created by the Calcutta meeting of the A. I. C. C. is obviously impermissible.

The A. I. C. C. is being degraded to the position of the parliament while the Working Committee is assuming the position of the Cabinet. Like the parliament in formally democratic States, the A. I. C. C. is degenerating into a debating club divested of all real power to initiate policy or to exercise effective control over the executive. The Congress is a political party, engaged in the struggle for the capture of power. It is utterly erroneous to run it on the model of a parliament. There is the danger of "parliamentary mentality" sapping the revolutionary spirit of the Con-

gress and even destroying its democratic character. The Calcutta meeting of the A. I. C. C. has made this danger more evident than before.

In pursuance of the Delhi resolution of the A. I. C. C. the Working Committee decided that office should be accepted in those provinces where Congress had captured a majority in the Legislatures. To make that resolution, was fully within the competence of the Working Committee. But a close scrutiny of its resolution reveals a desire to introduce a new spirit in the policy of accepting office. The Delhi resolution of the A. I. C. C. contemplated accepting office exclusively with the purpose of wrecking the provincial autonomy and thereby frustrating the insidious scheme of Federation. It was according to the traditional policy of non-co operation with the Imperialist State, and of rejecting the Constitution introduced with the object of reinforcing that State. The Wardha resolution of the Working Committee introduced the curious but dangerous idea of working the Constitution for wrecking it. It was not said in so many words; the idea, nevertheless, was there, and has since been the guiding principle of Congressmen in office. The idea of wrecking was pushed to the background, and even there, it was replaced by the neo-constitutionalist conception of combatting, which can be done by any parliamentary opposition.

Having thus seriously modified the spirit of the A. I. C. C. resolution, in the process of executing it, the

Working Committee was bound to submit its decision, not only for a formal endorsement, but carefully considered approval, of the body which alone has the right to frame political policies.

The task of the Calcutta meeting of the A. I. C. C. was to examine if the Wardha resolution of the Working Committee was strictly in consonance with the Delhi resolution, and if there was any departure, whether that was permissible under the proclaimed policy and programme of the Congress. The second task of the meeting was to review the experience of the three months in office to examine critically whether the programme of the Congress was being loyally pursued by its representatives in the Legislatures and in office. The third and the most important task was to lay down a concrete plan of action which the parliamentarians should carry on in pursuance of the object with which the Congress permitted them to accept office. We are compelled to say that the A. I. C. C. has not performed any one of these tasks. It has abdicated the power of supreme leadership which it derives from the representatives of the rank and file assembled in the plenary session of the Congress.

We are not accusing anybody. We do not impute motive. We simply desire to point out alarming developments which cannot be avoided unless the present Constitution of the Congress is radically changed and its organisational structure is so overhauled as to

permit democratic control of policy. The outstanding feature of our political activity to-day is that all fundamental problems have been quietly set aside in favour of a pronouncedly reformist programme even which cannot be carried out under the framework of the "charter of slavery", and even if the miracle were performed, that would not bring us anywhere near the goal of complete independence

The spirit of the movement was reflected in the extra-ordinarily large number of resolutions tabled by private members of the A. I. C. C. These were treated in the usual step-motherly way. The official resolutions, which had the precedence, ran counter to the spirit of the rank and file. The fact that they were all carried, does not prove anything. The largest number of votes, cast for any of the official resolutions, was less than a hundred. The A. I. C. C. membership is more than three hundred. Disregarding this significant fact, the Working Committee went still one step further in the direction of usurping the power of the A. I. C. C.

Private resolutions and speeches made it evident that actions on the part of Congressmen in office are disapproved by the rank and file. The Working Committee, obviously, endorses these actions. Yet, it was entrusted with the task of examining the complaint against those actions. This curious and undemocratic procedure was adopted on the pretext that ministerial activities

should not be discussed in public. What does that mean? It means that the A. I. C. C. is regarded as a conglomeration of irresponsible people who cannot be taken into confidence by the High Command of our movement. If that was not the opinion of our leaders, why were not the questions raised by private members discussed in a closed meeting of the A. I. C. C.?

Really, we are drifting into dangerous waters. The alarm must be sounded. The rank and file must be on the alert. Otherwise the perspective of our movement is dark and disquieting indeed.

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## CHAPTER XXX

### TO BE OR NOT TO BE

Many momentous matters must have been discussed and decided when the leaders of our movement from the different parts of the country assembled in Calcutta. Whatever might have happened behind closed doors, we do not know. Even the A. I. C. C. itself was not taken into full confidence by the supreme leaders of our movement. Some ministerialist is reported to have asked indignantly: "What is the function of the A. I. C. C. as

regards the Ministries ? Are Ministers to be called upon to explain every little thing ?” Mr. Prakasham, for example, complained of the “dual Government” thrust over the Ministers, and went to the extent of arguing that the Ministers were bound by the Officials Secrets Act. No formal resolution on this momentous question of the relation between the A. I. C. C. and Congressmen in office has been passed. But a convention has been tacitly established and that is a dangerous convention

That has been done by referring all the resolutions, unpalatable for the ministerialists, for the consideration of the Working Committee, where they will be quietly shelved or discussed behind closed doors. The principle of democratic control, even by a body which cannot be accused of radicalism (in spite of the 68 votes cast for the “Socialist” opposition), has been thrown overboard. The A. I. C. C. is not allowed to initiate policy. Formally there is no constitutional restriction to its power. But the established procedure of conducting business deprives it of the opportunity of taking any initiative. Private members’ resolutions are taken up at the fag-end of the session after the Committee has committed itself to the policy recommended by the Working Committee. Consequently, they are debarred from dealing with vital political issues. Not that all outstanding questions of serious political and organisational nature are always covered by resolutions recommended by the Working



Committee. But private members' resolutions dealing with any one of these neglected questions do not receive the attention they deserve, because they usually come up before an empty house.

A resolution dealing with a very important matter, which, for some reason or other, had no place in the official resolutions, was submitted to the A. L. C. C. It was not controversial, nor did it run counter to the resolutions recommended by the Working Committee; nor did it criticise the Ministries. It was very positive in its nature calling for a uniform plan of ministerial activities, framed with "the sole purpose of demonstrating that the inherent conflict between Imperialism and the welfare of the Indian people is irreconcilable". Having stated the generally accepted belief that "the purpose with which Congressmen have been permitted to accept office will be served by insisting upon the immediate introduction of legislative and administrative measures to give substantial relief to the masses", the resolution made the following suggestion regarding the method of framing the desired plan of ministerial action.

"The masses should be given the opportunity to express the grievances they wish to be redressed immediately, and formulate their minimum demands concretely. Therefore the All-India Congress Committee resolves (1) that all the primary Congress Committees should be directed to organise a systematic campaign

with the object of ascertaining the wishes of the people; and (2) that the wishes of the people thus ascertained should be the foundation of a concrete plan of ministerial action to be framed by the next session of the Congress”

We are of the opinion that the main task which the A. I. C. C. should have tackled in its last meeting was formulated in this resolution. Therefore we are at a loss to understand why such a resolution was not placed before the Committee at least for a serious discussion. Ofcourse, it was allowed to be moved, formally at the fag-end of the session when the house was almost empty and the few members present were not in a mood to participate in any serious discussion. Consequently, the seriousness of the resolution and of its being pigeon-holed, was not even realised by the average member of the A. I. C. C. The resolution demanded practice of the democratic principle of mass initiative. The way in which it was dealt with by the official machinery, proves that the principle may be professed, but is not to be practised.

While the outstanding task of framing a plan of action strictly in accord with the programme and previous resolutions of the Congress was neglected, the Committee passed a sheaf of resolutions mostly of minor importance. The only resolution dealing with an outstanding political problem was the resolution on the Federation; and it is a discouraging resolution. It reminds us of another memorable resolution—passed in the Central Legislative

<sup>1</sup>Assembly as regards the report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee which eventually became the Government of India Act. That resolution recorded the dissatisfaction of the Indian people with the projected Constitution and *requested* the British Government not to impose it on India. Perhaps, not commanding the majority of the Legislature and therefore compelled to follow the lead of Mr Jinnah, at that time, the Congress could not pass a more vigorous resolution. But to day we are in a different position. The All India Congress Committee is not required to adjust its resolutions to the reactionary and reformist inclinations of men like Jinnah. It is a gathering of men and women committed to an uncompromising struggle to be conducted with the object of defying the right of a foreign Parliament to dictate the political future of our country and to assert the right of self-determination. What are we to think when the A. L. C. C. contents itself with expressing "the opinion that Provincial Governments should move their Legislatures to give *formal* expression to this opposition to Federation and to *request the British Government* not to impose it on their provinces"? We wonder how many members of the A. L. C. C. while voting for this fateful resolution, (all except two, including the members of the Congress Socialist Party, voted for the resolution) realised that this one resolution completely repudiates all the resolutions and pronouncements of the Congress made ever since 1920, and

commits the Congress to the discredited policy of petitioning rulers for the grant of responsible Government.

The Congress is to request the British Government not to impose the Federal Scheme on India. What does this mean? It can mean only one or the other of the following: Either the Congress has given up the idea of fighting Imperialism, with the hope that Independence can be had for asking, if we can do it persistently and persuasively enough; or it has lost the confidence in its ability to conquer Independence by breaking down Imperialist resistance. In either case, the resolution represents the desire to lead the Congress away from the path of revolutionary mass struggle, the path which must be followed if we wish to attain the goal of Independence.

Once before, the Congress requested the British Government not to impose an unwanted Constitution on India. The request was scornfully disregarded, and the unwanted Constitution became the fundamental law of our country within a couple of years. Having thus failed to wreck the Constitution, we made up our mind to work it,—in the provinces. The argument in favour of this turncoat policy was that since the unwanted Constitution was there, let us derive whatever benefit could be had from it. We are going to do the same thing as regards the Federal Scheme. We shall again request the British Government not to impose it on India. Our request

will again be disregarded. Before long, Federation will be an accomplished fact, and we shall plausibly talk like practical politicians. The evil is there, let us make the best of it.

We are sure, the rank and file of the Congress do not approve of this neo-constitutionalist deviation. But they smart under a feeling of helplessness. The organisational structure of the Congress stands on the way to effective rank and file action to repudiate a generally disliked policy followed by the leaders. That is a difficulty, but given the necessary political consciousness and sufficient determination, it can be overcome. The question before the Congress today is: *to be or not to be, — to be the organ of a revolutionary struggle for national liberation, or not.* Let this question be answered clearly and categorically by every individual member of the Congress and every primary Congress Committee, then it will not be difficult to free the Congress from the danger of reformist deviation resulting either from conscious preference or from an utterly unwarranted spirit of defeatism.

If we really want to combat the Federation, we can do it successfully. One way was indicated by C. Jaganathan in his speech at the A. I. C. C. while moving an amendment to the official resolution. He suggested that the Congress should actively support the struggle of the States people, to be developed with the demand for the election of the States representatives to the

Federal Assembly. We add that the Congress should declare its determination not to participate in the Federal Legislature unless the entire body is elected by equal franchise.

With due respect for our legal brains, we make bold to say that decisive action on the part of Congress Ministries in the provinces will stop the introduction of the Federal Scheme. Only, our leaders should give up the absurd idea that one part of the Constitution can be wrecked while working the other part. The only way of preventing the imposition of the Federal Scheme is to paralyse the Government in the provinces and withdrawal of Congressmen from office will paralyse the Government, at least in seven provinces. But there again the question is: Is the Congress prepared to risk revolutionary action; or has it definitely chosen the blind-alley of reformism? The final word belongs to the rank and file

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## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE DANGER OF DISRUPTION

Not a few of our leaders, particularly those who have assumed ministerial dignity, would like to forget that at least one of the objects with which the Congress agreed to accept office was to combat the Constitution. This main object, which must remain before us until the Congress formally goes back on its political programme, is being pushed to the background with the argument that the strategic positions to-day occupied by Congressmen in office should be utilised for strengthening the Congress. This policy is justified on the authority of the Working Committee Resolution which permitted acceptance of office. But to accept office with the object of occupying strategic positions for combatting the Constitution was also a part of the same resolution. As a matter of fact, regarded not as rejection of the established Congress policy but as the adoption of a new method of executing it, that fateful resolution should be interpreted in that sense. In that case, to strengthen the Congress through the activities of Congressmen in office becomes only a means to the end which still formally remains to fight Imperialism. Therefore, we have a definite criterion to judge if the activities of the

Congressmen in office are having or promise to have the effect desired by our leaders themselves.

The immediate effect of accepting office, however, promises to be of the contrary nature. Instead of the Congress being strengthened as a result of ministerial activities, there is a definite danger of its being disrupted. The danger results from the confusion regarding ministerial responsibility. The question which is agitating the minds of our leaders to day is: What should be the relation between the Congressmen in office and the Congress organisations? There should be no difficulty in finding an answer to this question. Indeed, the question should not rise at all.

Congressmen did not accept office as individuals. Most of them could not even win the elections on their own individual merits. The election was won by the Congress as an organisation. It was fought for a programme, not in behalf of a group of individuals. After the election, the leaders of Congress majorities were asked by the Governors to assume the responsibility of office. Ordinarily, they should have accepted the invitation. But they did not. Because they were not the victors. The victor was the Congress, and they had to wait till they received the orders.

At that time, we did not hear of their responsibility to the electorate. They dared not act as the leaders of elected majorities, until the supreme command of the Congress *permitted* them to accept office in pursuance of



the declared policy of the Congress. It should be remembered that the wording of the Working Committee resolution was "Congressmen be *permitted* to accept office." That resolution has been endorsed by the A. I. C. C. in Calcutta. Yet, the unwarranted question of responsibility was raised in Calcutta and has become acute since then. In the light of the resolution, there should be no ambiguity. Those who accepted office *on the permission of the Congress* must be responsible primarily and in every respect to the Congress. This fundamental principle of organisation and discipline is being disputed to-day—not only by irresponsible individuals here and there, but by responsible leaders including Gandhiji himself. Hence the gravity of the danger of disruption.

After the A. I. C. C. meeting, the President issued a long statement on the question of ministerial responsibility. While making certain concessions to ministerial sensitiveness, he nevertheless laid down the principle that the Ministers are primarily responsible to the Congress, their responsibility to the electorate being through the primary Congress Committees. The President's judgment was not relished by the advocates of ministerial freedom. But discipline hushed the voice of discontent except in the case of the most irresponsible. The Anglo-Indian Press, however, rushed to the defence of the sovereignty of the electorate and the parliamentary prerogative of the Ministers. The imperialist press, notorious for its

anti-Congress propaganda, suddenly appearing as the defender of Congressmen in office against the dictatorship of their acknowledged leader, is indeed a sight for the Gods !

The "Times of India", for example, writes : "What is really superb in the President's statement is the way the electorate which voted Congress, is theoretically dubbed master and the legislators elected are ignored as though they do not exist. Congress Ministers, who have gained office by reason of the confidence of a majority in the respective Legislatures, become by some unique mental transformation responsible to All-India mentors in the shape of the A. I. C. C. and the Working Committee on the one hand, and to the local Congress Committee on the other. The legislatures do not, it would appear, count in the President's scheme of direction. He will find in the long run that provincial M. L. A.'s have something to say in the matter."

This is clearly an incitement for the Congress Legislators to revolt against party discipline. But the responsibility of Congressmen in office is so clearly to the Congress, that even their new advocates find it difficult to deny that the "*electorate voted Congress*" Yet, with the purpose of disrupting the Congress, the imperialist press organ viciously attacks the A. I. C. C. for its none too successful effort of exercising its authority over the Congressmen in office. It writes : "Ministers will soon find their position intolerable if a body of this sort

attempts to direct them as puppets on a khaddar string."

We could disregard this attempt to disrupt the Congress, if it were made only from hostile quarters. But unfortunately, the authority of the A. I. C. C. to control the activities of the Congressmen in office is being disputed from other sides—entirely unexpected. And the danger has become all the greater because the disruptive forces are able to operate on the authority of Gandhiji himself.

Writing in the "Harijan" on the A. I. C. C. meeting in Calcutta, he expresses the view that "Congress Ministers have a fourfold responsibility," and recognises that a Minister is *individually* responsible to his constituents in the first place. This is a dangerous view of the situation. It goes a long way to absolve Congressmen in office from their responsibility to the Congress as an organisation. Gandhiji goes farther when he holds that even "collectively Ministers are responsible" not to the Congress, but "to the majority of the Legislators" who, by a no confidence vote or similar means, may any moment drive them out of office. This is parliamentary mentality run wild. The Congress legislators are Congressmen. Therefore, their activity must also be guided by the Congress. They will drive the Ministers out not at their sweet will, but at the command of the Congress. If they are allowed to act on their own initiative, then Congress majority will be a fiction,

Finally, Gandhiji concedes that "a Congress Minister owes his position and responsibility to *his* Provincial Congress Committee and the A. I. C. C. also" But in the case of the first two responsibilities being discharged in accordance with the traditional parliamentary procedure, the grudging concession to the authority of the Congress becomes a mere formality. By dividing their responsibility Congressmen in office are practically freed from their responsibility to the Congress, and if that happens, their activities are bound to disrupt the Congress instead of strengthening it.

Gandhiji's opinion is being interpreted as a repudiation of the President's statement This conflict of authorities cannot but be harmful for the Congress as an organisation. Encouraged by Gandhiji's attitude, the advocates of a free hand for Ministers are coming out openly against the President. 'The "Hindusthan Times", for example, writes : "We are afraid that there will be many who may not agree with Pandit Jawaharlal in his inference that, since the electorate gave its confidence to the Congress party as a whole and not to particular individuals, the Ministers and the Congress party in the Legislatures are responsible to the the Congress and only through it to the electorate That will mean interposing the Congress between the Ministers and the electorate and practically denying the Ministers the right of approach to the electorate. We yield to none in our desire to maintain the Congress organisation and

influence in fact, but in our desire to do nothing to reduce the prestige and power of the Congress, we should not be betrayed into action likely to be interpreted as keeping the people and those whose duty it is to serve them, separate."

The Congress has got some hundreds of people elected to the Legislatures. On the strength of the majority conquered by the prestige and influence of the Congress, a number of men have been entrusted with the task of administering the affairs of the imperialist State. Now, the Congress is asked to step aside so that those whom it has placed into positions of power, may function constitutionally as Ministers of the imperialist State knowing no responsibility to others. It is really curious for a Congress organ to argue that by holding its members responsible to itself, the Congress will prevent them from doing their duty to the electorate. It was through the Congress that those who are Ministers of the imperialist State to-day secured the vote of the electorate. They can have no connection with the electorate except through the Congress as long as they remain members of the Congress. Let them have the foolhardiness to forfeit this honour, and few of them will again return to their present exalted position.

Criticising the attitude of the A.L.C., the "Tribune" of Lahore writes "None of these bodies is competent to interfere in the details of administration. Such interference will be nothing but irritating. And no

self-respecting Ministry can tolerate an interference of this kind by an extraneous body, be it the Congress itself which is not directly responsible to the Legislature or the electorate. So long as a Congress Ministry remains in office, it is reasonable for it to expect that Congressmen should have full faith and confidence in its competence to discharge its duties in accordance with the directions of the Congress." Whence are the directions of the Congress to come when the right of the A. I. C. C. to control ministerial activities is challenged? And what will happen to the Congress when a Congress Ministry, as well as a non-Congress Ministry, becomes so highly self-respecting as to regard the Congress as an *extraneous* body whose interference can not be tolerated?

These disruptive tendencies are being hailed and encouraged by the enemies of the Congress. Therefore, the rank and file Congressmen must be on the guard, more jealously than ever before. The "Leader" of Allahabad, for example, rushes to defend "the theory or the practice of responsibility in parliamentary and democratic England" against what it insinuates to be the dictatorial tendency of the President of the Congress. The President's attitude is not dictatorial. He is naturally eager to defend the integrity of the great mass organisation which has elected him its Leader. Let us follow him to fight the forces of disruption, no matter from where they come

## CHAPTER XXXII

### "STORM SIGNALS"

Revolutionaries throughout the country must have been pained and puzzled by the alarm sounded by Gandhiji against "the forces of disorder". Perhaps all those who consider themselves to be revolutionaries are classed in that category. We must protest against that false classification. If revolutionaries are to be condemned as forces of disorder, which should be combatted for the preservation of law and order, the Congress will before long be a house divided among itself. Because, the Congress is the greatest revolutionary organisation of our country and every sincere Congressman must be a confirmed revolutionary if he means what he professes. The Congress programme is a programme of revolution. Even the acceptance of office by Congressmen was meant to be a revolutionary action. Only revolutionaries can really combat the Constitution which has been imposed upon our country by Imperialism. Therefore, it is indeed painful and puzzling that anybody who does not approve of the Congressmen in office behaving as zealous defenders of the imperialist law and order, should be included in the "forces of disorder" seeking to destroy the influence and prestige of the Congress.

Gandhiji's attitude is so unfortunate that it has won the approbation of the "Times of India" which gleefully writes that he "has some trenchant things to say about strikes and the preservation of law and order" Now, industrial disputes are not extraordinary happenings wherever large numbers of workers are collectively employed under conditions not conducive to contentment Why then "are we living in Ahmedabad and Cawnpore in perpetual dread of lightning or unauthorised strikes?" Why are strikes to be dreaded at all? The right of industrial workers to living wages and tolerable conditions of existence is admitted by the Congress through the famous Karachi resolution

One cannot pretend to be impartial and say that there are many workers in India who are paid fairly and live under tolerable conditions. One has only to visit the chawls of Bombay or Ahmedabad to be convinced of the justness of the workers' demands. The Congress resolution on fundamental rights was passed six years ago In the meantime the wages have fallen. Only desperate action on the part of the workers themselves could curtail capitalist greed. And the only effective weapon in the hand of the workers is to withhold work collectively To deprive them of that weapon, on moral or legal grounds, is to deliver them to the tender mercies of those who get rich by exploiting them. The Indian National Congress will be the last to approve of unrestricted exploitation of toiling masses. The



governing principle of all the activities of the Congress is promotion of the welfare of the down trodden millions. Therefore, it is very difficult to understand how any action of the workers to defend and promote their welfare can be hostile to the Congress and violate its principles.

Lately, we have heard a good deal about the necessity of creating the atmosphere of non violence as the condition for any political progress or economic betterment. Technically, strict adherence to the principle of non-violence cannot be made the standard of loyalty to the Congress until the creed of the Congress is made more explicit. Every man or woman with an ethical sense is an admirer of truth and non violence. But a high ethical sense does not discount intelligence. In practical life, we cannot be guided by metaphysical abstractions. Therefore, when we pledge ourselves to adhere strictly to any principle, we must have some intelligent understanding of it. Otherwise, hypocrisy will be at a premium. To avoid that, we must define terms what is truth? What is its criterion? What is violence? What must be done in order to create an atmosphere of non-violence?

Indiscriminate use of terms representing metaphysical or abstract moral concepts not only creates confusion, but is likely to do our movement positive harm. Even to-day the imperialist press is taking advantage of this over-exaggerated emphasis with which "violence" is condemned by our leaders. We should feel uncomfortable

when our attitude towards certain events and activities of many a fighter for freedom wins the approbation of Imperialism. Abhorrence of violence makes us avowed enemies of Imperialism, which is organised violence. Violence does not cease to be violence when it is committed legally ; on the other hand, it cannot be condemned on formal ethical grounds when it is committed under compulsion by the victims of organised violence. When Imperialists applaud the anxiety of our leaders to create an atmosphere of non-violence, one need not be a Macchiavelli to see who will be benefitted by that healthy atmosphere.

We do not advocate violence. We abhor violence. Nobody is more eager to free the world from violence than we are. Therefore, we consider this laying of too much emphasis on non-violence to be mistaken, because it simply helps the standing violence against the Indian people.

Concretely, why should the workers be condemned for disturbing the atmosphere of non-violence when they go on strike ? And when this condemnation takes the form of repressive measures, those who condemn violence morally practise it in action. Why don't the Congressmen in office use their power to compel the employers to fulfil the demands of the workers which certainly are not exorbitant or unjust ? But while the Congress would discourage strike for the sake of non-violence, and Gandhiji himself regards strikes as storm signals, the employers are taking up an attitude which will provoke

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more industrial disputes unless the workers could be persuaded to starve peacefully or the Congress would permit its representatives in office to make free use of repressive laws.

The mill-owners have rejected the idea of minimum wages as ridiculous. A Committee has been set up to enquire into the matter. But is there much to enquire about? The outstanding fact is that the Congress is committed to bring about certain improvements in the condition of the workers. It will not be able to fulfil its pledge unless the capitalists are compelled to disgorge some of their ill-gotten benefit. This is a highly moral proposition. It also represents a palpable truth. Congressmen must act accordingly. And the only way of forcing the capitalist to make some concessions to the workers is to recognise the right of these latter to withhold labour collectively. Therefore, strikes are integral parts of activities which must be undertaken if the revolutionary programme of the Congress is to be put into practice. They are not storm signals. They simply represent the readiness of the masses to fight in self-defence. The strength of the Congress is derived from the growth of this readiness. If false alarm, no matter from which side it comes stampeded the Congress to undertake the task of checking the growth, it would simply act like the foolish man who cuts the branch on which he sits. Let us not be misled by false alarms. Let us not be scared by bogeys.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### REVOLUTION.

In his famous article, which has come to be known as the "Instrument of Instructions for Congressmen in office", Gandhiji wrote that office acceptance was meant to be a "serious attempt to avoid a bloody revolution.\*" Although qualified with the hair-raising term 'bloody', revolution itself is ruled out. We are of the opinion that the controversy over violence and non-violence is irrelevant for the purpose of having a clear statement of the political programme of the Congress.

In our last issue we said, "The Congress programme is a programme of revolution." This statement is made on the authority of a number of important, epoch-making resolutions adopted by the Congress ever since it came under the leadership of Gandhiji. The Congress has never adopted a comprehensive and clearly defined programme. The nearest approach to that is the resolution of the Karachi Congress on "Fundamental Rights.\*" Therefore, the character of the Congress programme must be deduced from its resolutions. From time to time, the Congress has declared its political objective and social ideals. That has committed it to a programme of revolution.

The latest authority for this opinion of ours is the following declaration of the President, made in a speech at Gauhati "If any one does not like revolution, he has chosen a very bad time to come to this world, for one cannot escape an earthquake that may change the face of the earth at a moment's notice" (The quotation is from an Associated Press message) The President was addressing an audience of students. But the observation holds good for the entire country. If the country is in the throes of a revolution, as the President appears to think, then, not only the students, but no one else can escape it. In such a situation, how is it possible for the Congress to avoid a revolution as Gandhiji wishes? The qualifying term 'bloody' should not confuse us. Gandhiji is eager not only to avoid a 'bloody revolution,' but also 'mass civil disobedience' on a scale greater than hitherto attempted.

It is generally believed that Gandhiji's contribution to politics is the technique of bringing about a great revolution bloodlessly. Let it be repeated that revolutionaries are not bloodthirsty. Revolutions are inherent in the process of social evolution. A dynamic view of this process cannot exclude the idea of revolution. Gandhiji's socio-political philosophy provides the ideology of the movement for the political freedom and social progress of the Indian people. Therefore, it does not, it cannot, exclude, the idea of revolution. A revolution must take place, only there should be no violence. Once

the former proposition is accepted—with the determination of acting up to it, the qualifying clause becomes of secondary importance. Unconditional acceptance of the main proposition does not permit us to make a cult of the means

When Gandhiji advocates the rejection of the path travelled by all the revolutionaries throughout the world in the past, he claims to have discovered a new path. Admitting his claim hypothetically, no revolutionary can have any scruple in following him. Therefore, the great revolutionary movement developing under the banner of the Congress has willingly lent itself for the experimentation of the new revolutionary technique of Gandhiji. In his own opinion, this technique culminates in mass civil disobedience. Experience has taught us that mass civil disobedience as practised hitherto does not take the country very near to its professed goal. If we are to regard the acceptance of office by Congressmen as a new way of achieving the Congress objective (Gandhiji says so in his article), that would imply rejection of the novel technique invented by Gandhiji. For, it must be remembered that the collapse of the last civil disobedience movement compelled Gandhiji to favour parliamentary action, which has logically culminated into the acceptance of office.

But the failure of civil disobedience in the past need not be taken as the conclusive proof of its inefficacy. Before passing any final judgment for or against the



new technique, civil disobedience must be given a full trial. It must be practised on a scale greater than hitherto attempted. But Gandhiji has declared himself against that experiment. Indeed, he is as eager to avoid that as bloody revolution. This is certainly a very tantalising attitude for him to take. He is a revolutionary. He has been hailed by many as the greatest revolutionary of all times. He wants us to eschew the usual means to bring about a revolution which he advocates as eagerly and sincerely as any other revolutionary. The country has responded to his call. The country is prepared to reject one method in favour of another method. But it cannot forego the goal, which can be reached only through a revolution—bloody or bloodless. And let it be repeated once again that true revolutionaries would be the first to welcome the latter. Very few responsible people preach violence. Acts of violence committed for revolutionary purposes are still fewer. Why, then, so much talk about non violence? This fighting a strawman is really remarkable.

To our utter surprise, Gandhiji has taken away the last hope of his leading us to a revolution in any way. He would not lead us even in the way which he himself pointed out as the alternative to a bloody revolution. His eagerness to avoid mass civil disobedience on a greater scale than hitherto attempted represents rejection not only of bloody revolution, but revolution itself.

So, in order to follow him farther, the Congress must repudiate a number of its own resolutions, which are regarded as milestones on the road of our struggle for freedom. We are faced with a serious problem. Let us face it courageously. Either let us stop talking of revolution, or let the Congress adopt a clearly defined programme of revolution, leaving aside the irrelevant issue of violence versus non-violence.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE

In a previous issue (Nr 31, Oct 31,) we indicated the contradiction between the creed and the political program of the Congress. We also showed how this contradiction reacted upon the approach to all the political and social problems of our movement. The situation becomes still more confused when the accepted creed of the Congress is interpreted in the terms of truth and non-violence. This problem demands serious consideration. Truth and non-violence, though not yet accepted formally, as the creed of the Congress, have, nevertheless, become the guiding principle of all its activities. They are very serious propositions. It is simple to repeat the terms parrot-like. They can easily

become dogmatic articles of faith. But to practise them is a different matter and to grasp their real implication is a highly complicated philosophical problem. Yet, for good or evil, they have come to occupy the most predominating place in our political phraseology, only to make the prevailing confusion more confounded.

We live in an atmosphere of suspicion and intolerance. Questioning is considered to be incompatible with loyalty.

One's earnest desire to understand how non violence can be strictly observed, when we are up against a system of organised and standing violence, is immediately suspected of sympathy for violence, and even condemned as tantamount to inciting violence. Critical approach to sayings and happenings, with the object of ascertaining the truth underlying the situation, is castigated as disregard for truth or degeneration into falsehood. The result is not only hypocrisy, but mass self deception. Not only is freedom of speech placed under ban one should not dare even to think. Since dogmatic faith in truth and non violence is the criterion of catholicity, everybody, naturally, tries to persuade himself that he is in possession of that faith. This sort of sincerity is worse than hypocrisy. If it is bad to deceive others, it is worse to deceive one's own self.

In view of the favour that they have found in the ruling circle of the Congress, and given the conformist tendency of the average Congressman, it can be expected

that, before long, truth and non-violence will become the formally accepted creed of our movement. Therefore, it is highly desirable that Congressmen are given the liberty to discuss freely and express their opinion frankly, before they commit themselves. Doubt should not be taken for disagreement with the proposition that truth is a highly appreciable ethical value and that it is very desirable to eliminate violence from social relations. In every situation, there can be more than two alternatives. It is not necessary to choose only between accepting and rejecting. There is a third alternative. In order to find that, we must subordinate faith to reason. Dogmatism is undesirable even in pure intellectual occupations: it is positively harmful in practical life, and politics is a matter of practice, not of simple profession. Therefore, we should approach the problem of making truth and non-violence the accepted creed of our movement, not with the object of simply accepting them in the spirit of conformism, or of rejecting them without giving such reasons as may carry conviction to all who would not profess what could not be practised without prejudicing the political program of our movement.

We cannot reject a proposition simply because we do not like it or we do not agree with it. That is dogmatism in the other direction. The rejection of any proposition is necessary and legitimate only when it is self-contradictory. The problem of the creed of our movement, therefore, should be approached neither with

the spirit of blind conformism, nor with the prejudice of the different kind, but critically, with the object of solving it in the light of all relevant facts and undesirable realities.

If the present creed of the Congress contradicts the political program of the movement for national liberation, the prospective, already virtually accepted, creed of truth and non violence, is self-contradictory. Regard for truth must compel us to recognise the fact that no relation in living nature or in society is non violent. But at this point, the terms must be defined. Otherwise we will be quarrelling over words—talking at cross-purposes. The first question to be answered is: What is truth? The second question is: What is truthfulness? Is it only to tell what one believes to be true, or is it to have due regard for the truth and determine our behaviour accordingly? Truth is one of the old Gods whom mankind has worshipped throughout ages without understanding its real nature. The ways of the Gods are beyond human understanding. But we cannot permit a mystic metaphysical conception to guide our activities on this mortal physical world. If we are to make truth the guiding principle of our life, including political activities, we must put some tangible content into that concept. It is not necessary to make any arbitrary construction. Truth has been defined and generally accepted in rational philosophy, as correspondence with objective reality.

If we accept this definition of truth, and unless we do that, we shall be only chasing a phantom, truthfulness shall demand of us the recognition that violence is in the nature of things. The religious may call it the divine law or the will of God. It may be argued that we want to change the order of things. Of course, for the religious, that would be a rather revolutionary attitude to take. They cannot believe in God and pretend to improve upon his creation. But even then we are not out of the dilemma. As a matter of fact, what is proposed is not to recognise truth and to tell the truth, but to disregard truth in favour of a legend which at the best can only be respected as a utopia. Since violence is in the order of things, and we human beings are parts of the living nature, our actions, even our thoughts, cannot be free of violence without disregarding truth and truthfulness.

The human being, though a part of nature, has acquired the potentiality to establish his mastery over the forces of nature. Consequently, it is quite conceivable that, in course of time, human relations will be free of violence, and peace and concord will prevail in society. But that ideal will not be realised automatically. In other words, there is no peaceful way to the establishment of peace on earth. There is no use of having an ideal if we are not prepared to do everything necessary for realising it.

Now, under the given conditions of the world, there

are those who are benefitted by the established relations. These relations are relations of violence. They are maintained through the application of force—or of coercion, which is but another form of force. Non violence will remain a dream unless these conditions are changed. How is that to be done? That is the problem. It will not be solved simply by reaffirming our love for non-violence. The profession as yet is only the love for an ideal. It is not yet a faith, as is commonly thought. One cannot believe in a thing that does not exist. In that case faith is prejudice. Non violence is still an ideal to be realised. It is not yet there. Therefore, we cannot have regard for truth and faith in non violence at the same time, unless the content of our faith is reduced to an ideal which is nothing but a fiction so long as the way to realising it still remains to be discovered.

Now, let us approach our political problem in the light of these considerations regarding the favoured creed whose ethical value is not to be disputed. Imperialist domination of our country is a truth. A whole series of evils result from that relation based on violence. Now, if we maintain that truth is eternal and immutable and can produce only good, then, we shall be precluded from practising the virtue of truthfulness. We shall not be permitted to tell the truth that the Indian people suffer from a variety of evils in consequence of British domination, because that would mean the admission that an

evil can result from the truth And what is the use of appreciating the moral value of truthfulness if the very regard for truth prevents us from telling the truth concerning our daily existence ?

If recognition of truth means the necessity to adjust our behaviour to the realities in the midst of which we live, then, we must forego the right, inherent in our human being, to change the state of affairs according to our ideal. Non-violence has to be thrown overboard, or, a taboo has to be placed on the desire for freedom.

These are some of the obvious contradictions involved in the creed to which the Congress may be formally committed before long That commitment would deprive us of the right of demanding political freedom, except as hypocrites or self-deceivers who gullibly accept ideals without the slightest notion about their implications and without thinking whether they can ever be realised.



## CHAPTER XXXV

### TELL THE TRUTH, PLEASE

When not in a defiant and belligerent mood, Congressmen in office complain against the impatience of their critics, and appeal for time and trust. There are, indeed, people who like unreasonable children ask for the moon. But the resort to "lawless laws" is not a very desirable method of giving them the quentus. Nor is that method very likely to be effective. It is more likely to provoke them to do more mischief. As regards average Congressmen and the electorate, they are not in a hurry to withhold their trust in the Congress. Ministers whom they put in office only the other day. They are in an expectant mood, and, ignorant of the intricacies of the Governmental machinery, cannot understand why the Congressmen in office do not move faster. They believe the Government to be all powerful. On the other hand, they are given to believe by our leaders that in seven provinces the Government is in the hands of Congressmen. Is it their fault if they fail to understand why the Congress leaders are so slow in fulfilling their expectations, even when they occupy the place of the almighty?

The situation is much less delicate than it appears to

be. The Congressmen in office can easily extricate themselves from the situation simply by acting according to the creed they profess. All they have to do is to tell the truth, the whole of the truth, and nothing but the truth. That is the only way of retaining the confidence of the people. Trust must be mutual. You cannot expect the people to be completely trustful, for all the time, if you do not take them into confidence. Unfortunately, that is not done. The reason is either the false notion of prestige or the desire on the part of our leaders to shoulder the responsibility all by themselves.

The growing agitation among the masses is neither a storm signal, nor does it indicate the operation of the forces of evil. It indicates confidence in the Congress. There is no reason to be nervous, and smell violence where there is none. We hear so much about the necessity for *creating* an atmosphere of non-violence. That is a wrong statement of fact. It implies that violence is in the air. We have all along maintained, and repeat once again, that it is a false alarm. The correct attitude from the point of view of those who put non-violence before every other ideal, would be to say that an atmosphere of non-violence *must be maintained*. For the time being there would be a general agreement, with that demand. No sensible person can advocate any violent action on the part of the Indian people under the given circumstances. And the only way of maintaining the atmosphere of non-violence, of preventing any impatient, ill-

considered action on the part of the masses, will be to tell the truth. In other words, those who make a cult of truth and non violence must practise the cult. Tell the truth and non violence will be guaranteed. Reluctance to tell the truth, either for the false notion of prestige or for any other reason, compels the votaries of non violence to practise violence while they condemn it.

During the election the Congress made a number of promises to the people. The majority of the electorate voted for the Congress. In seven provinces Congressmen are in office, and, backed by more or less stable majorities in the Legislatures, are apparently in the position to introduce legislative or other measures necessary to fulfil the election pledges forthwith. Why don't they do that? The common people are puzzled by this question. The Congressmen in office can easily and very honourably give a satisfactory answer to the question and thereby clear the atmosphere of distrust and pessimism which are gaining ground on account of their default to act in the way they should in discharge of their responsibility to themselves as well as to the people.

There have been strikes in industrial centres. The peasantry are also agitated. A few enthusiasts connected with these movements may have the idea of discrediting the Congress Ministries, and even the Congress itself by putting forward exorbitant demands. But the general demands are very moderate. As a matter of fact, they are the demands of the Congress. The workers demand not

even any increase of their wages which are undeniably insufficient to guarantee them the minimum means of subsistence. Their demand is restoration of the former rate of wages which have been cut heavily during the last ten years on the pretext of trade depression. Of late, the ground for that pretext has disappeared. So the demand of the workers is not only moderate but very justifiable. No Congressman can object to that demand. Yet, the Congress Ministries have found it difficult to have it satisfied.

That is an anomalous situation which is bound to breed distrust, unless the truth is told. The truth is that the Congressmen in office have not got the power to satisfy even such modest and justifiable demand of the workers. The way out of this unenviable situation is sought in the traditional bureaucratic procedure. What is the use of all this elaborate enquiry? Is it still to be proved that the wages are very low, that even the low wages have been heavily cut, and that elementary justice and the honour of the Congress demand that the cut should be restored? Instead of staging this bureaucratic show of an elaborate enquiry into the obvious, the Ministers should take the workers into confidence. They should go straight to them and talk to them not about service, non-violence and the like, but tell the plain truth that they want to have the workers' demands satisfied, but they have not the power to do so. That will restore confidence and really strengthen the Congress.

The peasants should be faced also with the same courage of telling the truth. Their demand is equally moderate. No Congressman can object to the measures urgently necessary for relieving the peasantry of the burden of rent and indebtedness. But there again, the Congress Ministries are powerless to do anything substantial. That is the truth, and it must be told. By telling the truth fearlessly, we shall be able to derive the greatest benefit from the policy of office acceptance. By telling the truth, the Ministers will be exposing the hollowness of the New Constitution and mobilise the masses in the inevitable struggle for replacing it with a Constitution made by the people themselves.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### . AND, BE NON-VIOLENT.

In the last issue we suggested that frankness and truthfulness on the part of the Congressmen in office will go a long way to maintain the atmosphere of non-violence by dispelling doubt and suspicion which may be exploited by the enemies of the Congress. The other way of maintaining the atmosphere of non-violence is the practice of the ideal by those who preach it.

In a society based on exploitation of man by man, violence underlies all legal and political relations. Broken heads, streets flowing with blood, or wars are not the only manifestations of violence. Just as the iron hand can be clothed in velvet gloves, so violence can be practised in many slightly veiled ways. In civilised society, it is actually done. Criminal laws even of the most democratic State, and administration of justice are founded upon violence, being instruments of coercion.

The idea of non-violence cannot be reconciled with the prevailing theory of State. The fundamental function of any State, whatever may be its legal form, is to maintain power and privileges by coercing the dissidents and non-conformists to obey. Obedience is compelled, and compulsion can never be free of violence. Of

course, the coercive function of the State is hidden behind specious theories and legal sophistry. But it is evident to the critical. The lover of truth cannot be blind to that. Truth is not always beautiful. Often it is disagreeable and very ugly.

It is argued that crimes against the society must be punished. This argument does not convince those who refusing to accept traditional ideas and conventional values for granted, raise the question why are crimes committed? What is justice? Scientific investigators have come to the conclusion that, as a rule, crimes are the result of social injustice. Yet, an unemployed worker stealing to feed his hungry children, is sent to jail as punishment for an offence against society. That is Government—that is preservation of law and order!

It is obvious that, following this beaten track, the Congressmen will never be able to free politics of violence. As long as society and Government do not guarantee every man and woman the opportunity to win the necessities of life by honest labour, they have no moral right to punish anybody for doing so otherwise. In no country in this world, except in one, that guarantee exists. Therefore, everywhere save in that one single country, the Government and all its laws are instruments of violence. It is more so in our country, where the function of the Government and its laws is to maintain the domination of a foreign system of exploitation. Is it not incongruous that men pledged to non-

violence should declare their determination "to govern" simply because they have accepted office in the Government under this system. They can do so only by forgetting the purpose with which they were sent where they are to-day. For the sake of practising non-violence in the strictest sense of the term, the Congressmen in office should get out of their present "exalted position," instead of shouldering the compromising responsibility of maintaining law and order which, under the given conditions, cannot be done without practising violence.

Yet, it appears that the Congressmen in office have been wholeheartedly converted to the doctrine that "even a Congress Government must govern". We refuse to believe that this conversion is the result of any conviction. We believe that conspiracy of the forces of foreign oppression and native reaction has succeeded in driving the representatives of the people to take up this unfortunate position. It is jubilantly announced in the imperialist press that "firmness has replaced vacillation. The Congress Governments will govern". The Congressmen in office are being congratulated upon their "firm stand against extremism". Can this be reconciled with the loudly professed love for non-violence?

Instead of telling the truth that they are being driven to this position, and refusing to shoulder the responsibility of this odium, the Congressmen in office are trying to defend their attitude. Coercive measures, vigorously condemned in the past by the Congress,



together with all the advocates of freedom and progress, are being justified with the dangerous argument that "licence is not freedom" Licence is abuse of freedom. Ours is not a free country. How can we abuse freedom, while we do not have it? Then, supposing that licence is being committed how is that going to be checked? Becoming adepts to the dangerous doctrine, the votaries of non-violence are found to be committing violence—and committing violence against those who for ages have suffered the most from violence committed in defence of social injustice and political oppression.

Giving his famous warning against storm signals Gandhiji hinted that he might advise Congressmen to get out of the Government, should the responsibility of office compel them to deviate from the ideal of non-violence. We do not know if Gandhiji thinks that the time has come for him to give the advice. But it is no longer to be denied or disputed that in office, Congressmen are finding themselves compelled to practise violence while they still preach non-violence, no doubt with all sincerity. On the other hand, we do not think that, even in office, Congressmen cannot practise non-violence as well as preach it. They can, if only they will abandon the false sense and fallacious theory of responsibility, and be responsible only to those who have placed them in their present position. Let them take the people into their confidence by telling the truth about their difficulties, then it will no longer be necessary for them

to be a party to acts of violence, which they certainly do not approve of. If non-violence is to be practised as well as preached, then the relation of the votaries of this admirable creed can be only of avowed hostility to the system of organised violence which is the established imperialist State in India

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## CHAPTER XXXVII

### WANTED A BOLD LEAD

The resolutions passed by the Working Committee at its recent meeting in Bombay are profoundly disappointing. Far from giving any new lead or opening up any new avenues of action, they set a seal of approval on all the actions and omissions of the Congress Ministers. The task of preparing the resolutions for the Haripura session of the Congress has been relegated to the next meeting which will be convened in the 1st week of February. As a matter of fact they ought to have been prepared by this meeting and published immediately for public discussion and criticism. Publishing the draft resolutions in February will leave very little time for the

delegates to place them before their principals, the Congress members and ascertain their views thereon. The ordinary Congress members are thus deprived of an opportunity to give expression to their views on the burning questions before the Congress and to give specific mandates to their delegates. This effectively shuts out the voice from below and militates against the policy of encouraging the mass initiative.

The burning issue before the country is the forthcoming Federation. It was expected that now at least the Working Committee, the supreme organ of the national movement, would give us its plan of action, show us the way of combatting and destroying the Federation which we are pledged to combat and destroy. But the Working Committee has sadly failed in this task. British imperialism is marshalling its forces, is making all its arrangements for foisting the Federation on us. It is bringing into operation all its devices, right from the forces of law and order, down to the peace mission of Lord Lothian to make India agree to the Federation scheme—while we on our side have merely declared our opposition to it, our determination to wreck it, but have not yet been told by our leaders what to do to achieve that object. The national movement has a right to know from its leaders their plan of action for attaining a particular national objective. Federation cannot be combatted, much less wrecked, by mere resolutions and declarations. It can be done only by a purposeful,

planned activity of the masses, rising step by step to higher levels and assuming larger and larger proportions. It is the task of the leadership to organise this action of the masses. It can be done only on the basis of a concretely formulated plan of action. The country was expecting that plan of action from the Working Committee. It has belied those expectations by refusing to give it at this stage and has thereby weakened the national struggle against the impending Federation.

Nobody expected or wanted the Working Committee to turn the Ministers out of office immediately. But it was expected that the Working Committee would subject their acts of commission and omission to a critical analysis and would give them specific instructions regarding the implementing of some at least of the items in the Election Manifesto and the Congress resolutions. A uniform plan of ministerial activity in all the provinces could have been easily chalked out and the Congress Ministers asked to conform to it on pain of the disapproval of the Working Committee. On the contrary, it seems to have been tacitly accepted that in general the activities of the Congress Ministers are outside the purview of the Working Committee or other organs of the Congress. This is a dangerous principle which can be accepted only at the cost of liquidating the Congress. The Congress Ministers are in office because they enjoy the confidence of the Congress, which in its turn enjoys the confidence of the country and the masses by virtue

of its unremitting struggle for their political freedom and social emancipation. They are subject to the orders and the discipline of the Congress. The Congress and its organs cannot divest themselves of this right.

During the last six months that they have been in office, the Congress Ministers have taken some steps to implement the Congress pledges. But they have been too halting and feeble. The Congress Ministers seem to be weighed down with the responsibility of carrying on the imperialist administration and consequently unable to take bold steps in the direction of the relief to the masses and the restoration of civil liberties. Unless this weight is taken off their chests by the formulation of a bold policy by the Working Committee, it will not be possible for them to do anything more than what they have done. It is the Working Committee alone which can do it, unburdened as it is with the responsibilities of office and entrusted as it is with the task of using the strategy of office-acceptance for wrecking the Constitution.

Instead of directing the Congress Ministers to move boldly forward in the direction of the release of political prisoners and the repeal of repressive laws the Working Committee has justified the slow progress in that direction and even the contrary actions of some of the Ministers by reference to the specious plea of the absence of a non-violent atmosphere. The resolutions of the Working Committee on this point and with reference

to the action of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee against the Kisan Sabhas are the most objectionable features of its decisions. Non-violence has been raised to the status of being the basic principle of the Congress and in its name, the Working Committee has justified even the violent actions of the Congress Ministers, running counter to the programme and policy of the Congress. This attitude of the Working Committee makes it obligatory on Congressmen to decide at an early date the question that we have been raising before them—What is the programme of the Congress : is it the attainment of political independence or the pursuit of the ethical ideal of non-violence ? Difference of opinion on this vital question has led to a confusion in the ranks of the nationalist movement and is responsible for this ambiguous and objectionable attitude of the Working Committee.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### WHO IS A CONGRESSMAN ?

It may appear strange to raise this question after the Congress has existed for fifty years. The answer is obvious. Each member of the Congress is a Congressman. The question, however, is not so simple as all that. It rises on the background of still another question. What is the Congress? This question also sounds equally strange. Nevertheless, experience is compelling all but the most gullible conformist to realise the necessity of raising this question; and it may be necessary to do so in a spirit of challenge.

The Congress is a political organisation. There is room for difference of views among its members. One of those views must be the predominating view for any given period of time. Eventually, it may be replaced by some opposing view if and when that commands the support of the majority. Minorities advocating opposing views may be required and even compelled to conform with certain disciplinary rules and organisational practices, so that the cohesion of the Congress as a whole remains intact. But even then, there should be the largest measure of freedom not only for expressing opposing views, but for action in accordance with them, so

long as the opposing minority strictly abides by the fundamental principles of the program of the Congress. And the Congress being a political organisation, those principles must be not only primarily, but expressly, political. Formally, the present Congress Constitution does not interfere with that freedom, although, in practice all opposing views and criticism regarding established political practices and organisational methods are looked upon with suspicion. The formal democracy of the Congress Constitution is invalidated by intolerance and dogmatism as regards other points which are not at all relevant to the program of a political party and, if admitted, should be given only secondary importance.

To-day, the catholicity of a Congressman is judged not by the adhesion to the fundamental principles of the political program of the Congress, and the readiness to fight for those principles, but by unquestioning loyalty to certain moral and metaphysical dogmas as well as by the rigorousness in certain practices of personal behaviour. On the first score, intolerance can be easily outwitted by deceit. There is no way of being sure about the sincerity of one's belief in truth and non-violence, as long as he is ready to make the necessary declaration. It may be possible to detect one practising violence while professing the would-be creed of the Congress. But as regards the other article of faith, the faithful must be taken on his own word, unless a rigorous system of catechism and inquisition were introduced. Conse-



quently the intolerance, which always characterises the dogmatist, makes itself felt regarding the observance of certain practices of personal behaviour prescribed for the Congressman.

During the current election of delegates to the coming annual session of the Congress, the intolerance of those who believe themselves to be the most catholic Congressmen, has defied democracy and disputed the right of personal liberty. Throughout the country, many a Congressman has been debarred from seeking election on the frivolous ground of not being a habitual wearer of khaddar. We know that this practice is constitutionally proscribed. We are also of the opinion that, for the sake of discipline, necessary for the purpose of cohesion, established rules must be scrupulously observed. Nor do we propose to discuss the question of khaddar on its merit, for the moment. What we want to point out is that not a few of those thus disqualified happen to be old Congressmen, whose adhesion to the fundamental principles of the political program of the Congress is beyond dispute. Is it proper to penalise such men on a charge, which is frivolous in relation to the political program of the Congress, whatever may be the economic merit of khaddar?

While avowed and tried fighters for freedom are thus denied the right to participate in the deliberations of a fateful session of the Congress, Congress organisations are being swamped by people who are entirely new to the

movement, and therefore have still to demonstrate the sincerity of their professed devotion to the cause of freedom. In many cases one cannot help having grave misgivings. The past cannot be easily overlooked, and the past record of not a few of these new converts is questionable.

Of course, the doors of a popular organisation like the Congress must be always open ; but the Congress is not a promiscuous body. It stands primarily for certain definite political ideals. So, the admission into its ranks must be subject to the acceptance of those ideals and the readiness to fight for them. But to-day, this standard is not strictly applied. The doors of the Congress have been thrown open to all and sundry, who conform, with certain public practices and declare their devotion to some moral and metaphysical dogmas, which are altogether irrelevant to the political program of the Congress. One of the harmful results of Congressmen accepting office has been the influx of these doubtful and undesirable elements into our ranks, and an inquisitorial attitude towards revolutionary fighters who may not be convinced of the necessity of strictly conforming with certain prescribed, but irrelevant practices.

If dissenters are deprived of the democratic right of placing their views before the organisation as a whole, this is bound to sink in the ruts of intellectual stultification. In that case, it will cease to grow in every respect. Its morale will degenerate, and its fighting capa-

city will be restricted. Instead of making a fetish of certain prescribed practices and pet dogmas they should be submitted for approval or rejection of the entire movement. And the movement will not be able to give an intelligent and unbiased judgment, unless the spirit of criticism is brought to bear on the situation and the dissenters are allowed free expression of opinion. Meanwhile slavish conformity with irrelevant practices and uncritical acceptance of dogmas of doubtful value should not be made the standard for measuring the catholicity of a Congressman. If that is done, premium will be placed on hypocrisy, and opportunist elements will drive out honest fighters for freedom from all positions of importance in the Congress ranks.

The current elections have also exposed that the present constitution of the Congress permits practices which effectively tamper with the democratic rights of the rank and file. The established method of enrolling members is open to all sorts of corruption. Bogus membership has come to be an outstanding feature of Congress organisations, and constituencies for electing delegates to the annual session of the Congress can be conveniently created on the basis of bogus membership. Then, there is the practice of delimiting constituencies arbitrarily. Through this practice, the machinery of the provincial organisations can be easily kept under bureaucratic control. Honest but poor Congressmen can be easily eliminated in the election. With this purpose, in

some provinces, the constituencies were delimited no less than three times, the last being on the very eve of the election. The result has been unexpected defeat of radical candidates who were considered to be dangerous and undesirable by those in the positions of power. Thanks to the corrupt practices possible, if not permissible, under the present constitution, men of money, though not of scruples, can capture Congress organisations and utilise them for their selfish purposes. This is happening throughout the country. Strict vigilance is necessary if the integrity of the Congress organisation is to be maintained in the atmosphere of opportunism created by the acceptance of office by Congressmen. The guarantee will be found in the practice of democratic right.

In this situation, it is very pertinent to raise the question, who is a Congressman ? The implication of the question is to divide the sheep from the goats to ascertain who is a *true* Congressman. We can no longer go by the standard of wearing khaddar which can be done even by those who join the Congress in the quest of loaves and fishes. For such people to swear by the creed of truth and non-violence means little difficulty. Therefore, we must find other standards, and those will be found in the political program of the Congress. A true Congressman is he who stands for the ideal of national independence, as defined in the Faizpur resolution, and aware of all its implications, is ever ready to

do whatever may be necessary for attaining our goal. There is much ambiguity on this fundamental question, which has been obscured by controversies over secondary issues. We raise the question, who is a Congressman? so that the attention of the movement may be focussed on its fundamental issues and thus the ground cleared for a straight and resolute fight for the conquest of real political power by the people, which is the political content of the ideal of the Congress

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### FREE THE FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM

The hunger-strike of political prisoners in Lahore and Multan jails, has brought before the country again the question of the release of political prisoners in all its seriousness. It is no more a mere academic question. It is the question of the life or death of a number of valiant fighters for freedom, who have been rotting for years in imperialist jails. It is more than a week since the prisoners in Punjab resorted to hunger-strike. Their example may be followed by prisoners in other provinces. And soon we shall be faced with the alternative of either allowing all these brave men to die of hunger or taking energetic action for their immediate release.

The Punjab prisoners have left us in no doubt regarding their determination. This time it is a struggle for liberty or death. Three months back the Andaman prisoners suspended their hunger-strike at the request of prominent Congress leaders particularly M. Gandhi on the express undertaking given by them in the name of the Congress that nothing will be left undone to secure their release. This time there is no such hope and the hunger-strikers have issued an express appeal to the leaders and to their friends not to request them to desist from their course. Let there be no complacency therefore, with the thought that the prisoners could be after all persuaded to break their fast and that we shall be spared the self-immolation of our brave young fighters.

There can be no doubt as well about the intentions of imperialism. It regards the political prisoners as its avowed enemies and is not prepared to make them any concessions. The release of some prisoners during the last few months was secured not by the grace of the Imperialist Government but by the pressure of public opinion exercised in some provinces through the Congress Ministries. The repatriation of political prisoners from the Andamans was the result of their heroic hunger-strike and the mighty wave of public indignation and insistent demand that rose in its wake. Left to itself Imperialism will do nothing for mitigating the miserable lot of the political prisoners. It may on the other hand regard the hunger-strike as a challenge to its might and

seek to break the will of the prisoners by resorting to all the coercive processes within its power

It is equally futile to rely on the negotiating skill or the spiritual eminence of one individual, however great. In spite of all his efforts, all the sweet reasonableness that he brought to bear upon it, Mahatma Gandhi was not able to achieve much. About a thousand Bengal detenus were released, but it is problematical how much of it was due to Mahatma's efforts. But not one political prisoner was released and hundreds of detenus are still in detention camps. Gandhiji's sweet reasonableness, his transparent sincerity, his earnest efforts made at the cost of the breakdown of his health did not succeed in melting the stony heart of the Imperialist Government. And to-day even these are not available to us. Looking to the condition of his health, it seems improbable that he will be able to do what he did two months back.

We are therefore left with the alternative of allowing our political prisoners to die or to avert that disaster by bringing into operation the mighty force of the organised will of the Indian people demanding their immediate release. Let us not under-estimate the might of this force. The will of the people, if properly organised and directed, can easily secure the release of our incarcerated warriors. Today we are in a better position to exercise that will, as our representatives are holding the strings of power in seven major provinces of India. If our representatives in office cannot avert the most painful

death of our brave young fighters by insisting on their immediate release, no useful purpose will be served by their further continuance in office. They are there not merely to secure a few petty reforms for the masses. They have been put in office to broaden the field of civil liberties, to secure the release of political prisoners, to consolidate the strength of the masses and to secure from imperialism the most cherished demands of the people. Today the most cherished and imperative demand of the people is : Save the lives of the political prisoners by ordering their immediate release. Let our Ministers press this demand on imperialism and insist on its fulfilment on the pain of their withdrawal from offices. Imperialism will not be able to refuse this demand coming from responsible ministers of seven major provinces and backed by the organised strength of the people That is the only way of averting the impending disaster

It is regrettable that though a week has passed, there are yet no signs of organised movement to back the demand of the hunger-strikers The Congress must move immediately. It is pledged to the Andaman prisoners to fight for their early release. As the embodiment of the people's will, it is its task to secure the freedom of all those who have fought for the people We appeal to the Congress High Command to issue immediate instructions for a country-wide agitation in support of the hunger-strikers We appeal to them to instruct the Congress Ministers to insist upon the



immediate release of all political prisoners. But Congressmen need not wait for instructions from above. The programme and the resolutions of the Congress authorise and compel them to act immediately in support of the hunger-strikers. Action for the release of political prisoners is a responsibility not of M. Gandhi alone or of the Congress leaders. *It is the responsibility of each and every Congressman.* Let them act in an effective and energetic manner to discharge that heavy responsibility.

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## CHAPTER XI

### THE HARIPIURA CONGRESS

As previously announced, the Working Committee met to prepare the resolutions that will be placed before the coming session of the Congress. The draft resolutions have been published, and it may be taken for granted that they will be passed by the Congress, without any substantial change. Thus, the result of the deliberations of the Congress still to meet is already known. It is pre-determined. That being the case, it is of not much use to comment on the resolutions drafted by the Working Committee. The Congress organisation as a

whole is not given the opportunity to discuss the resolutions exhaustively and express intelligent judgment. Yet the draft resolutions must be scrutinised so that their implications may be known for the guidance of the delegates who will assemble in a few days to give their verdict. But before proceeding to do that, we feel compelled to say a few words about the procedure of the annual sessions of the Congress.

The object of the annual session is to give the entire organisation the opportunity to express its opinion which should determine the policy and activity of the movement in the future. As a matter of fact, the object is practically forgotten. The delegates assemble mostly without any considered opinion and not knowing what they are expected to do. Lately, the elections of delegates to the annual session have been very keenly contested. But unfortunately outstanding political issues do not play any role in the elections. Whoever enrolls a sufficiently large number of primary Congress members, gets elected a delegate to the Congress. As a rule, he does not represent the political views of his electors, who mostly have no political views. Their membership of the Congress does not mean anything more than paying four annas and attending occasional public meetings. So long as the rank and file of the movement remain in this state of political backwardness, the programme and policy must be formed by the leaders—the initiative must come from the top. But it is not a desirable

state of affairs. It must be changed. The rank and file must be politically educated. That can be done by stimulating the intellectual activity of the rank and file. In order to develop and strengthen the movement, the leadership should submit itself to the democratic control of the rank and file.

This year a step in that direction has been taken. It is a very small and faltering step. But the departure from the procedure of the past is to be welcomed. In the past, the resolutions drafted by the Working Committee were published only when the delegates assembled in the annual session. The discussion began in the Subjects Committee which never had more than a day or two for rushing through a heavy program. Consequently, the discussion could not be exhaustive. The great majority of the delegates did not even participate in it. This year the draft resolutions have been published a little earlier. The more politically alert delegates will have the chance of carefully scrutinising them, and participate in the discussion in the Subjects Committee and the open session, adequately prepared for the purpose. But essentially the situation still remains unchanged. Individual delegates may be able to participate more intelligently in the annual session. But they will not be able to ascertain the opinion of their electors. There is no time for it. So, the policy to be followed by the entire movement will still be framed without the rank and file having the chance of its being

explained to them and of expressing an intelligent opinion.

The leader may draft the resolutions, but the execution of the resolutions depends entirely upon the action of the rank and file. Activisation of the rank and file is the essential condition for further development of our struggle for freedom—for the strengthening of the Congress as an organisation. The activities of the movement should take place according to the resolutions passed by its leading organs. They are bound to be defective and ineffective so long as they are not properly understood by the rank and file, and are adopted without their intelligent co-operation. The leaders must secure this co-operation if they wish to guide the movement democratically. For that purpose, the procedure of the annual session should be changed radically and that would necessitate amendment of the Congress Constitution. As a matter of fact, the present procedure which precludes democratic control, is determined by the Constitution. The prevailing system of enrolling members is thoroughly unsatisfactory. It places serious obstacles to the political education of the rank and file. As long as the rank and file of the movement remains politically backward, there can be no collective leadership, the absence of which is a dangerous weakness for any mass movement.

Now, turning to the resolutions drafted by the Working Committee, we are inclined to believe that they

would not be endorsed by the delegates in their present form, if their implications were explained to the membership, and the delegates were given specific instruction as regards what they should do in order to give correct expression to the spirit of their electors. Among many others, three very important resolutions have been recommended by the Working Committee. These resolutions if adopted by the Congress, will imply abandonment of certain professed principles and quiet deviation from the path of revolutionary struggle for the conquest of power. The resolution appreciating the work of Congress Ministries contradicts the resolution of the Working Committee according to which Congressmen accepted office. Of course, the contradiction is not obvious. It can be discerned only through close scrutiny by the politically educated who maintain that our activities should be guided by some practical principle, and our policies should have some logic.

We are not slow to appreciate properly the positive outcome of the policy of office acceptance. Fully conscious of the danger of deviation involved in the policy, we nevertheless advocated the acceptance of office. Now we shall be failing in our duty to the public and in our loyalty to the principles and program of the Congress, if we do not warn against the danger of deviation. Therefore, we must say that the Working Committee resolution recommends repudiation not only of all the other more radical declarations of the Congress

about the new constitution, but also even of the compromising resolution of the Working Committee itself. That resolution which permitted Congressmen to accept office, represents a deviation from the previously declared policy of the Congress. The task of *wrecking* the constitution was substituted by that of *combating* it. That moderation was further supplemented by the decision to work the constitution for all practical purposes.

Now, the Working Committee recommends a policy which excludes even the idea of combating the constitution. Now we are told that "the Congress has permitted the formation of Ministries by Congressmen with a view to strengthen the people and hasten their march to the goal of independence." This ambiguous re-statement of the purpose of office-acceptance implies the admission that the goal of independence can be reached by working, for all practical purposes, the Constitution which, according to the same resolution, entrenches British Imperialism and prevents the popular Ministries from solving the grave problem of our country. "Work outside the Legislatures" is still regarded as "the vital part of the Congress program". But the nature of that work is not defined. Nor is the movement given any plan of action. On the other hand, the Congressmen in office are given a completely free hand to interpret the Congress program so as to suit the restrictions and limitations of their position. We fail to see how their

activities will be co-ordinated with the activities of the Congress as a whole. As a matter of fact, the activities of the Congress organisation have been severely curbed on the plea that the Ministers should not be embarrassed. By adopting the resolution recommended by the Working Committee, the Congress will practically liquidate all mass activity and stake its political fortune on the doubtful achievements of its representatives in office.

The resolution on the vexatious question of political activity in the States is very disappointing. Indeed, it is positively reactionary. The arguments for prohibiting all Congress activities in the States are not at all convincing. They represent a spirit of capitulation before the autocratic governments who cry "Hands off the states." By passing the resolution recommended by the Working Committee, the Congress will obey the orders of the autocratic rulers. There was a time, not very long ago, when Congress Committees could not function legally and properly in other parts of India, and the dignity of the national flag could not be always successfully defended. We did not liquidate all Congress organisations. On the contrary, we insisted upon our right to carry on political activities and defend the national flag. If the Congress stands for full responsible government in the States as the Working Committee resolutions declares, we fail to see why it should not defend its principles there just as it did in the

British provinces in the past, and may have to do again in the future. We hope that this resolution will not be passed by the Congress

The capitulatory spirit of the resolution on political activities in the States contradicts the resolution on the Federation, which we welcome as an improvement upon all the past resolutions on the subject. We have suggested a country-wide agitation with the demand for the election of the states peoples' representatives to the Federal Assembly as an effective method of preventing the imposition of the Federation. In the beginning the idea did not find much favour. But finally it has been incorporated in the resolution of the Working Committee. In doing so, the Working Committee has taken a step towards giving the movement a concrete plan of action for executing its resolution. But how shall we enforce the demand for representative institutions in the States, if the Congress shirks the responsibility of leading the States people in the struggle with that demand? Loose thinking and dislike for resolute action make the resolution of the Working Committee vague and indecisive. The responsibility is left with the A. I. C. C. That will be a curious thing to do. There can be no doubt regarding the "line of action to be pursued," if we really want to oppose the Federation effectively. Nor can there be any doubt that attempts will be made to impose it, "despite the declared will of the people." In this situation, the Congress is expected to give a more defi



nite lead than merely repeat once again the refusal to co-operate with the Federation. To force the dissolution of the provincial legislatures is the only effective method of obstructing the Federation. By adopting the resolution, regarding the Congress Ministries, recommended by the Working Committee, the Congress will tie its hands. The mistaken idea that by staying indefinitely in office in the provinces, the Congressmen will be able to hasten our march towards the goal of independence, will logically preclude the perspective of their resigning in order to precipitate a constitutional crisis with the object of preventing the imposition of the Federation. As a matter of fact in the resolution on the Federation the working of the provincial Constitution is defended. Consequently the resolution simply stultifies itself and has to be left vague and undecisive.

On the whole, by endorsing the resolutions recommended by the Working Committee, the Haripura Congress will give no lead to the country. None of the outstanding political problems will be solved. We shall be still following a hand-to-mouth policy. The organisational defects of the Congress, which do not permit it to develop into a revolutionary party of the people engaged in the struggle for the capture of power, will not be removed. But until and unless these defects are removed, the Congress will not be able to develop a collective democratic leadership which alone can frame the policy of resolute revolutionary action according to the objec

tive urge of the masses. The process, however, should begin at the bottom. The urgently necessary organisational re-adjustment will not take place from above. The primary Congress Committees must be democratised, and then the whole organisation will be reconstituted and re-orientated under pressure from below. The Haripura Congress will not give a revolutionary lead, but it may be expected to convince a larger number of active political workers of the necessity of initiative from below.

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## CHAPTER XLI

### A SURVEY OF THE YEAR

The Faizpur session of the Congress opened up a new chapter in our struggle for freedom. It defined the ideal of complete independence in such a way as left no room for any ambiguity. The Lahore resolution was a historical declaration. But it did not go far enough. By stipulating the means, it placed the ideal of complete independence practically beyond our reach. The Lahore resolution still stands with its limitations and short-

comings. It has not been formally amended. But actually that has been done by the Faizpur resolution.

The revolutionary implication of the Faizpur resolution is fully appreciated by only a few even today. For that reason, it has not yet been resolutely acted upon. On the other hand, there is a tendency to brush it aside as a declaration made for no more serious purpose than to satisfy some impractical idealists. This tendency is born of the desire to avoid the path of revolutionary struggle which the Faizpur resolution indicates by implication, if not quite explicitly. By declaring that complete independence meant the capture of effective political power by the majority of the Indian people, at Faizpur the Congress freed its hand from all restrictions and limitations as regards the means to that end.

In a previous issue, we pointed out the contradiction between the so-called creed and the program of the Congress. We did that in order to help Congressmen realise the revolutionary implication of the Faizpur resolution, which has shown us the way out of the dilemma. As soon as the political objective of the Congress is given a concrete shape, the question how that is to be attained becomes a matter of expediency. By placing before us the ideal of complete independence in a concrete form and opening up the perspective of struggle necessary for its attainment, the Faizpur resolution has rendered the creed, in so far as it specifies

the means, inoperative for all practical purposes. As a moral doctrine, the creed still remains. But experience has compelled the Congress to realise that it cannot be an integral part of its political program.

Lest we forget, let us recapitulate the most salient passage of the Faizpur resolution. "The Congress stands for a genuine democratic State in India, where political power has been transferred to the people as a whole and the government is under their effective control. Such a State can only come into existence through a Constituent Assembly elected by adult suffrage and having the power to determine finally the constitution of the country. To this end, the Congress works in the country and organises the masses, and this objective must be kept in view by the representatives of the Congress in the Legislatures."

Apparently, the resolution does not answer the question whether the people will come in possession of power through its gradual, peaceful transfer by the imperialist rulers, or they shall have to conquer it from those who possess it to day. But the ambiguity is only apparent. Indeed, the resolution visualises a time when political power will have been "transferred" to the people. But it specifies how that transfer will take place. The constitution of the "genuine democratic State" for which the Congress stands will be framed by a Constituent Assembly possessed of the power to do so. How will it come to the possession of that power? This crucial question has

not been as yet answered sufficiently clearly. But it has been placed before us by the Faizpur resolution. That is a great advance. Experience alone will enable us to find the only answer to it.

The history of the world provides no example of effective political power being transferred voluntarily by the ruler to the ruled. The transfer always takes place in consequence of seizure. It is argued that the past has not exhausted all future possibilities. With this argument some of our leaders have preferred the perspective of transfer to that of capture. But it is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. The Faizpur resolution leaves us no choice. Having defined the nature of the State to be established upon the conquest of national freedom, it goes to describe the process of this conquest and in that clearly rejects the restrictions which the Lahore resolution had placed upon the forms and nature of the struggle for attaining the goal of complete independence.

The Lahore resolution was couched partially in ethical terms. The Faizpur resolution is exclusively political. The one set before us an end and stipulated the means to it. The means are of such a nature as deprived us of the freedom of action. It did not take into consideration that there are two parties involved in the struggle, and that the attitude of the opposing party will necessarily compel us to change our forms and methods of struggle.

unless we are prepared to abandon the end to remain true to the means

The other extricates us from that vicious circle. It gives us a positive program of action for the realisation of the political objective which is defined in concrete political terms. Even if the hypothetical possibility of peaceful transfer of power is admitted, still we are allowed by this resolution the fullest freedom of changing the forms and methods of struggle, if and when we shall be compelled to do so by the attitude of the opposing party.

However, the Faizpur resolution commits the Congress to a definite plan of political action. According to it, the Congress undertakes to work in the country and organise the masses for the establishment of a government which will be under the effective control of the people. That is clear enough. Any survey of events during the last year must be done with the purpose of ascertaining whether our activities have been strictly according to the plan made by the Faizpur Congress.

The decision for the Congressmen to accept office under the new Constitution was the most momentous event of the year. It did not come as a surprise,—not for those who can detect logic in events. The acceptance of office by Congressmen was a foregone conclusion of a policy adopted before the Faizpur Congress. That was, rejection of the former tactics of boycott and the decision to contest the elections under the new Constitution. Given the oft-repeated resolution that

the new Constitution was not acceptable to the Congress and that it was determined to defeat that effort to reinforce the imperialist yoke participation in the elections as well as acceptance of office could be both fitted into a plan of action in pursuance of the Faizpur resolution. Therefore, it was useless to continue the controversy even after the Faizpur Congress. While combatting the inevitable conclusion of a previously accepted policy, the opponents of office-acceptance simply frittered away their energy. Instead of doing that, they should have emphasised on the revolutionary purpose with which office could be accepted. Unfortunately, they failed to do that. The result was that, when finally the office was accepted, the revolutionary purpose was all but forgotten.

The resolution of the A. I. C. C. meeting at Delhi represented a subtle deviation from the path of struggle indicated by the Faizpur Congress. The A. I. C. C. refused to declare indeed, even admit, that Congressmen would accept office only with a revolutionary purpose—that of disorganising the imperialist State from within. The deviation was fully evident in the Wardha resolution which not only replaced the categorical idea of wrecking by the convenient formula of combatting, but introduced other ideas not at all compatible with the perspective of a revolutionary struggle. The Wardha resolution introduced reformism in the scheme of Congress activity. Reformism by itself is not always objectionable. An

agitation for partial demands can have revolutionary consequences provided it is organised with a consciously revolutionary purpose

The defect of the Wardha resolution was that it set up the dangerous illusion of political power being transferred by Imperialism voluntarily to the representatives of the Indian people. It admitted that under the new Constitution, the Ministers had the power to promote the welfare of the people. That was a blow to the fundamental principles of our struggle for freedom. That was a repudiation of the attitude taken by the Congress previously. The Congress had maintained that the new Constitution did not confer real power on the representatives of the people, and on that ground it had refused to participate in the working of that Constitution. The perspective of a revolutionary struggle for the capture of power was rejected by that of a peaceful gradual transfer of power not on the strength of any experience, but by discovering in the new Constitution some merit that it does not actually possess. The perspective of a gradual peaceful transfer of power results from the illusion or wishful thinking that the new Constitution confers on popular Ministers the power necessary for introducing substantial improvement in the conditions of the people. The Wardha resolution launched the Congress on the dangerous course of neo-constitutionalism. Consequently, it was contrary to the spirit of the Faizpur resolution. That contradiction vitiated all our activities ever



since office was accepted by Congressmen in seven provinces.

We hear about the achievements of the Congress Ministers. If self-glorification were sobered by the spirit of criticism, the emptiness of those achievements would be evident. We need not be so very proud for having introduced a few paltry reforms. Imperialism itself would have done that. Indeed, if those reforms were in any way antagonistic to the interest of Imperialism, they could not be introduced. However, we should not confound the "achievements" of the Ministers with the achievements of the Congress. What has been the achievement of the Congress during the last year? That is the challenging question we must answer to-day. At the Faizpur Congress we undertook the task of wrecking the unwanted Constitution. What have we done in that respect? Honesty and regard for truth must compel us to say that while still talking of combatting the constitution, (we no longer talk of wrecking) we are working it in practice. Is that a very creditable achievement?

The positive outcome of the policy of office acceptance is not to be measured by the achievements of the Ministers. As a matter of fact, the revolutionary purpose behind that policy is to demonstrate that the new Constitution does not give the Ministers the power to achieve anything. That demonstration will quicken the will of the people and thereby enable the Congress to take up the struggle for the capture of power. The formation of

Congress Ministries has created a psychological atmosphere very conducive for the mobilisation of the masses in that struggle. People who used to be arrested and imprisoned time and again only the other day, constitute the government in a number of provinces. This fact alone has made a deep impression on the masses. Their confidence in the power of the Congress has grown tremendously. The local Congress leaders are no longer outlaws who could be beaten by the ordinary policeman on any pretext. They are connected with the Government. Local Congress Committees are regarded as the custodians of power. This is a very solid foundation to build upon. But for that purpose, we shall have to act in a way different from hitherto. The confidence in the Congress must be converted into the self-confidence of the masses. The masses should be made conscious of the fact that they have put Congressmen in office.

The course followed hitherto has been to appeal to the masses to have trust in the Congressmen. That is bound to lead to mass passivity. As a matter of fact, there is a tendency to suspend all forms of mass activity on the plea that the Ministers should not be embarrassed. The argument is that the Ministers should be given time to settle down to their work so that they could do something for the good of the people. This reformist mentality does not visualise any extra-parliamentary action in the near future. Its perspective is a full term of office with the sole purpose of introducing some petty reforms.

That is not the purpose of the Congress and Congress is greater than the Ministers. The conflict of perspective has grown sharper in course of the last year. While the neo-constitutionalist deviation has found favour in the upper circle, the rank and file have grown dissatisfied with the perspective of prolonged passivity. The divergence has been felt throughout the organisation, from the top to the bottom. The election of delegates to the Haripura Congress was a fight between the Ministerialists in control of the machinery of the organisation, and the radical elements trying to forge forward. Generally, the latter have been defeated. But that does not mean that they do not count on the support of the membership. Their defeat is mostly due to the defects in the constitution, and procedure of election which can be exploited by those in control of the machinery for their advantage. While defeated in the elections to the Haripura Congress, the radical elements have gained ground in the lower Congress Committees. This is a very hopeful sign. Activisation of the lower Congress Committees will eventually influence the policy of the Congress as a whole, and objectionable tendencies at the top will be checked.

At the last moment comes the news that the demand for the release of the political prisoners has forced the Congress men in office to act in the way they are expected to act. In some provinces, Congressmen have resigned office. We may be heading for a country wide constitu-

tional crisis. If we had brought it about deliberately, as should have been done according to the purpose with which office was accepted, the Haripura Congress might open up a new chapter in the history of our struggle. It still remains to be seen how the situation will develop. But one thing is certain, that the pressure of the rank and file has forced the hands of the Ministers. Let us hope that the Haripura Congress will check that tendency of deviating from the spirit of Faizapur.

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## CHAPTER XLII

### THE CRISIS.

I am not going to move any amendment. I shall say a few words to exercise the right possessed by any member of a democratic organisation. We are meeting in the midst of a situation pregnant with great revolutionary possibilities. Instead of giving a lead to the country, the Congress is going to entrust the Working Committee with the responsibility of solving the crisis. Any decision of the Working Committee will be binding on the whole organisation. Therefore, the Working Committee is obliged to ascertain the opinion of those

who will be bound by its decision. On the other hand it is the duty of every delegate to express frankly and fearlessly his or her opinion.

It is regrettable that the Congress meets unprepared to take up the very serious challenge that has been thrown down by Imperialism. It would have been desirable to make the decision as regards our answer to the challenge in this Congress in session. However, while referring to the Working Committee, the delegates assembled here should express their opinion so that the Working Committee will know what kind of a decision it is expected to make, so as to give expression to the will of the rank and file of our organisation. I am going to express not only my personal opinion, but the opinion of a large number of delegates and of a larger section of the rank and file.

How are we to answer fittingly and effectively the challenge of Imperialism? The answer will be given not by the Working Committee but by the Congress as a whole. Therefore, it would have been better if the delegates could return to their respective fields of activity with some idea about the kind of action they may be called upon to organise before long. There should be no difficulty in giving some indication in that respect. In the present situation, we shall have to choose between two alternative courses. Attack or retreat. There is no other alternative. Either we shall have to find some convenient way for our representatives to go back to

their offices in U. P. and Bihar ; or the extension of the crisis to other provinces will be inevitable. So, the question, after all, is simple. Are we prepared to weaken the demand for the release of *all* the political prisoners ? Unless we are prepared to do that, the Congress Ministers in other provinces must resign to back up the action of their colleagues in the two provinces. There must be a uniformity of policy. Congressmen cannot continue in office in some provinces, while we shall be involved in an open struggle in other provinces. Since our course is determined by the nature of our demand, why should we temporise ? We should take up the challenge immediately. We have the power to do so. Congress Ministers have resigned in two provinces to enforce the demand of the release of the political prisoners not only in those two provinces, but of all political prisoners throughout the country. If they did not consciously raise the issue on the All-India scale, the Viceroy's action has revealed the All-India nature of the demand for the release of the political prisoners. The action of the Viceroy is a challenge to the whole country. Therefore, the step taken in the two provinces should be followed by Congress Ministers in the other provinces as well.

The proper answer to the refusal of the Viceroy to release the political prisoners in the two provinces, would be to instruct Congress Ministers in other provinces to press simultaneously the demand for the release of all the

political prisoners in all the provinces. The instruction should have been given here and now by this Congress. The threat of resignation in all the seven provinces is the only sanction for enforcing our demand. We should openly tell the Viceroy and the country what kind of action we are going to take if our demand is not accepted. I do not belong to those who believe that there is no midway between the Secretariat and Jail. I am of the opinion that collective action is bound to be successful. If the demand has been pressed simultaneously in all the seven provinces under the threat of resignation, the present crisis would be of a different nature; or there would be no crisis at all. It was a mistake to advise our Ministers in two provinces to resign just on the eve of the Congress. There was no reason to be in such a hurry. The mistake can be rectified even now by placing the whole question before the Congress and allow it to give the answer in the spirit of the rank and file. If we declare our determination to extend the crisis for enforcing our demand as an All-India issue, Imperialism will think more than twice before precipitating a first-class political crisis which is bound to shake its foundation.

The resignation of Congress Ministries in all the provinces will open before us two perspectives. Either a re-election, or suspension of the Constitution. The third alternative of the Governor carrying on with minority Ministries is excluded, because just now assemblies must

be in session for passing budgets. No minority Ministry can remain in office if the assemblies are in session. Of course, there is the possibility of the Governors exercising special power to pass the budget without the sanction of the legislature. But in that case, the fateful day can be postponed only for six months. Then assemblies must be convened, and minority ministries will be immediately overthrown. The process of suspending the legislatures recurrently for six months and carrying on with minority Ministries, cannot go on for ever. Imperialism is not likely to take that course, which will represent the admission that the new Constitution cannot be worked with popular support. In that case, we shall have gained our object of wrecking the Constitution. Incidentally, we shall have made stable government impossible. Therefore, Imperialism is bound to choose between re-election and complete suspension of the Constitution. The latter course again will serve our purpose. We shall force Imperialism to admit that the new Constitution is not acceptable to the Indian people. Our resolution to reject the Constitution framed without the consent of the Indian people will be successfully carried out. Having thus wrecked the provincial part of the Constitution, we shall frustrate the plan of imposing the Federal Scheme. If we are serious about combatting the Federation, we can do no better than force the suspension of provincial autonomy and we can do that by generalising the



crisis which has been brought about by imperialist obstinacy

Therefore, we need not fear anything worse than a re-election in consequence of Congress Ministers resigning in all the provinces. I am inclined to believe that Imperialism will not even risk that. Because the Congress is sure to win a greater majority in the re-election. To prevent that, Imperialism would be prepared to give in on minor issues and we shall have secured the release of all the political prisoners. Should re-election take place, we shall be presented with a splendid opportunity for agitation and propaganda with the object of intensifying our struggle for freedom. A greater victory in the re-election being sure, the Congressmen will resign to-day only to be entreated to accept office again before long. Having a greater popular sanction, they would be in the position to carry on the work more effectively than they expect to do to-day. Therefore, by taking up the challenge of Imperialism, we do not run the risk of losing anything. We are sure to come out victorious in another round of our fight. The political education of the masses will be promoted, the revolutionary consciousness of Congressmen will be quickened, and consequently, the Congress will be consolidated organisationally. The essential condition for the capture of power by the people is disorganisation of the established State. That condition will be created by forcing repeated elections. A revolutionary crisis will be brought

about by combined and co-ordinated parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action

Some speakers have tried to make the impression that if the Congress decides in favour of generalising the crisis, or even to continue it in the two provinces, we should all return home ready to go to jail before long. Direct action is demanded as against parliamentary action. I do not understand what is meant by 'direct action'. Every action is direct. The propagandists of this vague idea of direct action do not open before us any other perspective than that of going to jail. There was a time when it was necessary to go to jail. But time has changed, and we can do something better and more effective. Voluntary imprisonment need not be the standard of revolutionary virtue for all time. The Congress has taken to parliamentarism, and some of our leaders may be reluctant to discard that path, because of the ineffectiveness of the kind of direct action that did not lead us farther than jail. The time has come for us to find other methods of struggle. Therefore, let us not talk loosely about direct action, but think out what sort of action can be effectively undertaken under the given situation. We are in a position to organise very revolutionary actions. The parliamentary crisis gives us the opportunity of developing a powerful extra-parliamentary mass movement. Even if the Constitution is suspended, the only alternative for us will not be civil disobedience or some sort of a premature action

bound to end in disaster. We shall have to develop a mass resistance to Imperialist absolutism, with partial demands. Once the unwanted Constitution is scrapped by Imperialism itself, we shall formulate our minimum demands, and find the suitable ways and means for enforcing them. To overcome crises and avoid deadlocks, is not our concern. We have declared repeatedly our intention of ending the present Constitution. Let us go ahead and do that.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### WHITHER ?

Commenting on the outcome of the Haripura Congress and the subsequent developments in U P and Bihar, a liberal journal exclaims "Parliamentary mentality has triumphed. The exclamation is a statement of fact. We are also compelled to make the same observation, only with a different feeling not of gratification but of misgiving. We have nothing against parliamentary activity as such. We believe that revolutionary struggle can be waged even on the parliamentary front. Therefore we advocated acceptance of office by Congressmen. But to-day our leaders have

practically forgotten the object with which office was accepted by Congressmen. Therefore, we must raise the voice of protest.

The Haripura Congress was to settle a number of fundamental tactical issues raised in course of our struggle during the preceding year. To frame a plan of action for the Congressmen sent to fight on the parliamentary front was the outstanding task. The Haripura Congress was to decide how we are going to prevent the imposition of the Federal scheme. New organisational problems had to be tackled. These problems have been raised by the sudden inflation of Congress membership. To run efficiently and effectively a political organisation with three million members is a difficult task. It is not enough to be proud of our numerical strength. Number alone does not make for power. The progress, to be sound, must be qualitative as well as quantitative. Inflation of membership may be a source of danger.

But all these fundamental issues were eclipsed by the excitement created by the resignation of Congress Ministries in two provinces. The critically minded could not help feeling that the crisis was precipitated with a purpose. Subsequent developments prove that the doubt was not groundless. It was as likely as not that the resignation of Congress Ministries in two provinces would develop into a first class political crisis on the All-India scale. An action likely to produce such far-reaching consequences should not have been taken just

on the eve of the Congress. The Ministers had been trying to secure the release of the political prisoners ever since they came to office. All along they had met the resistance of those who possess real power. It was clear long before that some drastic action must be taken if the demand for the release of the political prisoners was to be enforced. No such action was taken. As a matter of fact there is reason to believe that neither the Ministers nor the Working Committee were in favour of precipitating a crisis on that issue. What made them change their mind just on the eve of the Congress? And why was the issue forced only in two provinces? The demand for the release of the political prisoners is not a provincial demand. Therefore, if any drastic action were to be taken in support of it, that should be a joint action on the national scale. There was no use of precipitating a first-class political crisis by taking a step which could not secure the release of the great majority of the political prisoners. All these considerations compel one to come to the conclusion that either the step taken in the U P and Bihar was a mistake, or that it was done with the purpose of diverting the attention of the Congress from the burning issues of the day.

In any case, by advising the Ministers to resign in two provinces, on the very eve of the Congress, the Working Committee encroached upon the sovereign authority of the annual session. Such a momentous

decision should have been taken with the consent of the Congress. This method of reducing the plenary sessions of the Congress and the meetings of the A. I. C. C., to empty demonstrations is bound to prevent the Congress from becoming an instrument for the conquest of political power which is its declared object. There must be leadership. There must be discipline. But democracy cannot go by the board. Unfortunately, that is happening. We must sound the alarm.

In spite of all good intentions, the Congressmen in office have not been working in the spirit of the resolution which permitted them to accept office. We do not doubt their motives. But we cannot ignore facts. They have introduced some ameliorative measures. They may succeed in enforcing some petty reforms. They are certainly burning with the desire of promoting the welfare of the masses. But they are only too apt to forget that it is incompatible with the interests of Imperialism, and that all effective power still remains reserved to those who are in no way responsible to the people. The object of wrecking the Constitution has been completely abandoned in practice, though it is still remembered in resolutions. The argument against Congressmen resigning offices in other provinces in support of their colleagues in U. P. and Bihar was that by remaining in office they would be able to promote the welfare of the people. This argument represents a complete change in outlook. It represents

a repudiation of everything we said in the past against the new Constitution. It represents the view that the welfare of the Indian people does not demand the overthrow of Imperialism. While still talking of combatting the part of the Constitution still to be imposed, our leaders have tacitly agreed to work the part already imposed. Otherwise, why should there be such an aversion to create crises and deadlocks? We shall never be able to wreck this Constitution if we are not prepared to render impossible any government under it.

The perspective opened before us to-day, by the Haripura Congress and the "peaceful" solution of the crisis is continuation of the Congress Ministries for another four years. Parliamentary mentality has certainly triumphed. That was pre-determined. Did not Gandhiji already in 1934 make the prophetic pronouncement that parliamentary mentality had come to stay? That is all very well. But there are many Congressmen who will find it difficult to square their conscience, and ask the question "Where are we going?"

A part of the new perspective is the certainty that the Federal scheme will be introduced in the face of our loud protest which will only hide tacit agreement. It must be realised once for all that the only way to prevent the imposition of the Federation is to wreck the provincial part of the Constitution. If our leaders will continue having their own way, this is not going to happen. So, while we are talking of combatting the Federation, in

practice we are preparing the ground for its advent. Humanitarian desire to stick to office in the provinces with the object of introducing some petty reforms is bound to undermine the revolutionary determination of frustrating the scheme of Imperialism to consolidate itself by establishing the Federation. We must be clear about our ideal. The choice is between humanitarian reformism and revolutionary emancipation. The former will not lead us to the latter. Let there be no illusion. If the risky path of revolution is to be abandoned, let that be done frankly. If we do not like to be revolutionaries, let us at least be honest.

It is said that we have come out of the crisis with victory. That is an illusion. The great majority of the political prisoners is not affected by the peaceful solution of the crisis. While reporting in the House of Commons the agreement in U. P. and Bihar, Winterton said that there would be no announcement regarding the release of other political prisoners. At the same time, he also declared that "the Imperial Government under the Government of India Act continues to be responsible for determining the nature of the future Government of British India." That is a declaration clear enough for all who do not wish to play the ostrich. Once again the prestige of the Congress has been lowered, and its position weakened, by the reluctance of our leaders to travel the only way which leads to the goal of freedom.



## CHAPTER XLV

### THE NEW PERSPECTIVE

The quick termination of the ministerial crisis in Bihar and U P is being celebrated as a victory of the popular cause. If that is so, we should believe that Imperialism has suffered a defeat. Indeed, that impression is being created by whatever is written and said in the press and from the platform by way of popularising the achievements of the Haripura Congress. It is natural for the right wing to do so. Responsible for the policy of localising the crisis with the object of ending it as early as possible, they are bound to interpret the result of the policy as a victory. And from their point of view, it is a victory. But the curious phenomenon is that the 'left wing' also has joined the chorus.

This is not the first time that a defeat is being glorified as victory. It was done in the case of the Gandhi Irwin Pact. That time we were told that a truce was made with the object of preparing the country better prepared for the coming war. The only preparation, however, was to put the rank and file to sleep with the lullaby of victory. Before long the war did come. It was sprung upon us. We were caught unawares. A disastrous defeat was the consequence. Not many, even

to day, would admit that the Congress was defeated in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1932. Prejudice dies hard, but illusion is still more difficult to be killed. The present constitutionalist deviation and its latest victory are the results of the defeat in the last Civil Disobedience movement. If the Congress really emerged victorious from the Civil Disobedience movement, why was it suspended? One does not set aside the weapon which has conquered a victory. The natural thing to do would be to use it with greater determination to make the victory final.

If we do not look out, the illusion of a fictitious victory will once again, prevent us from preparing for the attack which the enemy is sure to deliver before long. A defeat can be transformed into victory only if we have the moral courage to admit that we are defeated, discover the cause which contributed to the defeat, and set about to remove the causes. It is often necessary to beat a strategic retreat in order to occupy an advantageous position from which an offensive can be taken with greater hope of success. Was such a tactic necessary in the situation created by the resignation of Congress Ministries in Bihar and U.P.? No. That crisis was precipitated by ourselves. We should not have done so if we were not prepared to push farther ahead. But all these arguments are irrelevant for those who maintain that we have come out victorious. So, let us see what is the net result of the crisis.

That is stated in the joint communique issued by the Governors and Prime Ministers of the two provinces concerned. On the face of it, both documents give the assurance that in future neither the Governors nor the Viceroy would interfere with "the legitimate functions of the responsible Ministers" This is a very vague statement that could be easily made by the Governors without foregoing the least of their dictatorial powers. On the other hand, by countersigning this statement, the Ministers commit themselves to certain constitutional principles which cannot be scrupulously observed without prejudicing the Congress program. What is the standard to judge whether this or that function of the Ministers is legitimate? The standard is set in the Government of India Act. By signing the joint statement, Congressmen at the head of two provincial Governments undertake to function according to a Constitution which the Congress has never accepted and has declared its determination to replace by a Constitution to be framed by the people of India. Then, there is the question of responsibility. To whom are the Ministers responsible? As Congressmen, they are responsible in the first place to the Congress, and through the Congress to the oppressed and exploited masses of India. That responsibility is violated by their tacitly recognising the legal validity of the Government of India Act, which has no such validity from the point of view of the Indian people. In view of these

serious implications of the joint statement, it was not permissible for Congressmen to sign them. But they have not committed personal indiscipline. They have acted according to the instruction of the Working Committee, and the responsibility for the capitulation, represented by their signing the statement, belongs to the entire leadership of the Congress.

What has been gained by this act of dubious statesmanship? Even on the particular issue of the crisis, the intransigence of Imperialism has triumphed. The demand for the release of political prisoners has been quietly withdrawn. Indeed, the term "political prisoners" has been expunged from the vocabulary of the Congress Ministers. The joint statement refers to 'prisoners classed as political'. Our imperialist rulers have always refused to distinguish political offenders from ordinary criminals. Congress Ministers have accepted that point of view. It is not only an insult to the brave fighters for freedom. It is rejection of a generally accepted principle of democracy, according to which offences against the State are not to be classed as crime. If we do not have the courage to stand by that principle, we had better liquidate our struggle for freedom. Any act committed in pursuance of the Congress goal of complete independence is an offence against the established State. If it is admitted that all such acts can be legally punished as crimes, then all nationalists are criminals. Instead of being criminals, let us be honest slaves and make a virtue of our slavery.

Concretely and immediately, the statement deprives the Ministers of the power to release the political prisoners. Their modest task is to examine individual cases. That is celebrated as the establishment of a "healthy convention" The convention is that the general demand for the release of political prisoners should be withdrawn. The release of individuals will depend on the sweet will of the Governor. The Ministers can examine and recommend. But the order for release can be given only by the Governor. That is another healthy convention established by the happy ending of the crisis. Is it really a victory that we can celebrate with a clear conscience?

But in one sense, it is certainly a victory. It is a victory of constitutionalism, which means a victory for Imperialism. Read what they say in the "London Times" and also in the organs of Imperialism in this country, and you will be able to have a correct idea about the result of the crisis. Victory of neo-constitutionalism and suspension of all forms of revolutionary struggle—that is the new perspective opened before us by the policy sanctioned by the Haripura Congress.

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## CHAPETR XLV

### NEO-CONSTITUTIONALISM

Ten years ago, the Lahore Congress declared complete independence to be its goal. Last year, the Faizpur Congress defined complete independence as the establishment of a democratic State in which effective political power will be vested in the people. The implication of that definition is that complete independence was conditional upon the capture of political power by the people. Until recently, few Congressmen believed that Imperialism would ever transfer effective power voluntarily to the people of India. To-day, an entirely new perspective has been placed before us. That is the perspective of gradual transfer of power. This is an illusion, and a dangerous illusion.

The believers in the possibility of gradual transfer of power say that Imperialism will not do that voluntarily. It will be compelled to do so under pressure. But it is not said what will be the form of that pressure, or how it will be exerted. Assuming that some form of pressure will be brought to bear upon the situation, can we be sure that Imperialism will always give in? What are we

going to do when it will resist? That question remains to be faced boldly and answered frankly so long as the goal of independence itself is not modified. That has not yet been done. But we are heading towards it. Meanwhile, the vagueness, regarding the nature of action which will be taken to compel Imperialism to transfer power gradually, is being dispelled. The Haripura resolutions commit the Congress to constitutionalism. Consequently, the ideal of complete independence in the sense of separation from the British Empire is being quietly set aside. We hear the talk about peace with Imperialism and equal partnership in a Federation of free nations in unexpected but authoritative quarters.

In his speech at Nagpur, the President said, "Satyagraha will have to be resorted to only in case constitutional agitation fails to persuade Britain from launching the Federation. The Congress does not yearn for fight. It only wants its demand of complete independence to be granted. If our demands are conceded, then there will be no cause for a conflict." The idea of a conflict still remains, but the possibility of attaining complete independence without a conflict, *through constitutional agitation*, is admitted. We presume that the President personally does not believe in this possibility. He is simply expressing the view of the High Command as he is bound to do as the President. Theoretically, the possibility may be admitted. We do not believe in the possibility. But it..

is no longer a matter of theoretical discussion. Only a few days ago, soon after the Haripura Congress, the Under-Secretary of State declared "that the Imperial Government under the Government of India Act continues to be responsible for determining the nature of the future Government of British India", and that therefore it could not have any regard for the resolutions passed in seven provincial legislatures urging that the Constitution be replaced by a Constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly in India

That is a clear declaration of the intention of Imperialism not to give in to constitutional agitation. It won't be "persuaded from launching the Federation" It is determined to go ahead. Under the situation, we need no longer talk in hypothetical terms. There is no room for "buts and ifs" in the formulation of our demands. Imperialism has clearly refused to concede our demands. There should never have been any illusion on this score. However, now the illusion has been completely dispelled by Imperialism. Yet, we are asked still to entertain that illusion.

The surprising thing is this the Congress has regained its faith in constitutional agitation. But this was a foregone conclusion. This relapse into neo-constitutionalism was inherent in the ambiguity of our program. By specifying the means through which the Congress was to attain the goal of complete independence, the Lahore resolution itself placed that goal beyond our reach. It



may still remain before us as an ideal. But being an ideal never to be attained by the means voluntarily chosen by the Congress, in practical politics it must necessarily be set aside. That is being done by our leaders who are practical politicians. The substance of whatever they say is that the kind of independence attainable through "legitimate and peaceful means" can be attained through constitutional agitation. Consequently, there is no objection to raising the taboo against that form of struggle. This deplorable development of neo-constitutionalism follows logically from the Lahore resolution itself. Nevertheless, the development is deplorable because, if not arrested, it is bound to take us away from the road to independence, which still remains our goal, formally.

The neo-constitutionalist deviation is justified with the argument that the anxiety to avoid conflict is dictated by the desire to strengthen the Congress.

In answer to this argument we must ask two questions. How will the Congress be strengthened by the present policy of suspending all mass activity so as not to embarrass the Ministers? With what purpose is the Congress to be strengthened? For one thing, the Congress is strong enough to-day. Besides, whatever strength it possesses has been the result of mass awakening and mass activity. If all other forms of political activity are to be suspended in favour of ministerial activity, the Congress as an organisation is bound to be weakened instead of being

strengthened The Congress organisation will be strengthened in proportion as the masses realise that no substantial improvement in their conditions of life is possible under the established state of affairs. That realisation will mobilise them in the struggle for freedom and consequently strengthen the Congress But the present policy is to make the masses believe that their welfare can be promoted without disturbing the present political regime. Some petty reforms introduced by Congressmen in office, with the approval of Imperialism, may increase the confidence of the masses in the Congress But, on the other hand, they will reinforce the position of Imperialism. If greater confidence of the masses is to be enlisted by suspending revolutionary struggle against Imperialism and by co-operating with it, then the Congress will be strengthened not as a revolutionary party of the Indian masses fighting for freedom, but as an adjunct to the Imperialist State, an instrument in the hands of those who aspire to share power with Imperialism Is that a perspective compatible with our ideal of complete independence ?

We repeat once again that the struggle for freedom can be waged also on the parliamentary front, that the occupation of office by Congressmen can serve useful purpose But we must be clear about that purpose The purpose of the Congress is not to secure a few petty reforms with the sanction of Imperialism. Acceptance of office will serve the purpose of the Congress only when

that strategic position is occupied for dislocating the machinery of the Imperialist State from within. But during the last year, the Congress policy has been progressively purged of all revolutionary purposes. The process has been formally sanctioned by the Haripura Congress. There should be no crisis. The Congress does not want conflict. There is going to be a peaceful progress towards freedom. In the light of this new perspective, the ideal of freedom stands out in an entirely different complexion. That is clear for all who want to see.

With all their talk for the gallery, our leaders have not left us in doubt. The provincial autonomy has come to stay, and Federation will follow soon. Not a single effective step has yet been taken to prevent the imposition of the Federation. The patriotism of our leaders is beyond doubt. But that alone does not take us far. They have failed to organise the people in a revolutionary struggle for freedom. They do not know how that can be done. They seem to think that it is not possible. Hence their preference for the line of least resistance. But the organisation is bigger than its leaders. If one set of leaders fails it, the Congress is bound to create an alternative leadership, which will have the courage to reflect its revolutionary urge. Neo-constitutionalism must be combatted. The revolutionary nature of our program must be clarified. The flag of complete independence shall not be lowered. It is for the rank and file to hold it aloft and carry it farther.

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## APPENDIX I

### THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS WERE FORWARDED TO THE HARIPURA SESSION OF THE CONGRESS IN 1938.

#### A Declaration of Principle.

The Fifty-first Session of the Indian National Congress makes the following declaration of principle with the purpose of emphasising, elaborating and clarifying resolutions adopted by it from time to time in the past :—

1. The Indian National Congress represents the will of the Indian people to democratic national freedom. As an organisation, it is the instrument created by the oppressed and exploited masses, for the enforcement of this will to freedom

2 The Congress stands for the democratic principle of self-determination and is determined to lead the people of India in the struggle for asserting that democratic right. The object of the Indian National Congress is the establishment in India of a Government of the people by the people, which is conditional

upon the capture of power by the people. It does not believe that Imperialism will ever abdicate real power voluntarily. Therefore, it does not entertain any illusion regarding the possibility of attaining its goal through gradual transfer of power.

3. By a democratic Government the Congress understands a Government under effective control of the majority of the people, so that political freedom, cultural progress and economic prosperity are guaranteed to the nation as a whole.

4. The Congress is of the opinion that the antiquated forms of non productive (feudal, semi feudal, sacerdotal, etc.) ownership of land are obstacles to the normal economic development of the country. A revolution in the relation of property in the main means of production is necessary for national welfare and prosperity. That revolution will be brought about by the transfer of the ownership of land from the non productive rent receivers to the actual cultivators of the soil.

5. The Congress is further of the opinion that industrial expansion and commercial activity of a country are limited by the power of consumption of its inhabitants. Therefore, the Congress believes that the fundamental duty of a democratic Government is to take measures calculated to increase the purchasing power of the masses. In our country, a national democratic Government is obliged to introduce the following measures for the purpose.

- (a) the transfer of ownership of land to the peasants ;
- (b) reduction of the charges on the peasantry to such an extent as will leave them in possession of no less than 80 per cent of their produce;
- (c) legally guaranteed minimum wages to assure an irreducible standard of living to those working in the fields, factories transport, offices, schools etc ,
- (d) extensive public works and industrial undertakings by the State for employing productively the huge mass of labour wasted to-day

6 True to the principles of democracy, the Congress is opposed to the exploitation of man by man, and it will not permit the accumulation of national wealth in the possession of a few, accentuating the misery of the majority Therefore, it stands for industrial democracy and equitable distribution of national wealth to be guaranteed through :

- (a) Public (national, municipal or local) ownership of all the modern means of transportation ;
- (b) State control of heavy industries and mining which will receive financial aid in the form of credit facilities ,
- (c) State control over banking and the credit organisation ;
- (d) Social insurance.

## ON ORGANISATION

It is resolved that, with the purpose of consolidating it organisationally, activating its rank and file, and democratising its leadership the constitution, organisational structure and methods of operation of the Congress should be revised on the following lines

1 The system of the annual enrolment of members to be replaced by the system of a stable membership. There should be no specified period for enrolling members. While joining the Congress, one shall not be required to sign any pledge, but to declare agreement with the program of the Congress, readiness to do everything in pursuance of that program, and abide by democratically framed rules and regulations of the organisation.

2 The system of paying four annas once upon enrolment to be replaced by the system of periodical payment of a minimum membership fee. The minimum should be so fixed as to suit the purse of the poorest, and shall be collected monthly, in kind where it may be found necessary for the convenience of collection

3. The rights and responsibilities of membership to be clearly specified. Membership will incur the obligation of some concrete day-to-day activity in pursuance of the program of the Congress.

4 Every primary Congress Committee to convene weekly membership meetings for report on current political events and discussion of civic and economic problems facing the people of the locality. In case of a large membership it can be broken up into several groups to meet in different times and places.

5 Default in the payment of the membership due and failure to attend the membership meeting over a specified period, shall lead to the forfeiture of membership. To divide the membership into categories active and ordinary. Those unable to participate in daily political activity shall be placed in the second category.

6 The primary Congress Committees shall take active interest in the daily life of the masses by carrying on standing agitation and organising movements for the redress of their daily grievances.

7 The present parliamentary method (installation of polling booths, appointment of returning officers etc) for the election of delegates to the Congress and of members of local committees shall be replaced by the method of election in membership meetings.

8 Territorial constituencies shall be abolished. A minimum number of primary members shall have the right of electing one delegate to the annual session of the Congress. In fixing the quota, it should be borne in mind that the number of delegates to the annual session should be limited so that the Congress can be a businesslike gathering, competent and properly equipped.



for discussing serious problems and framing practical policies for the direction of a great revolutionary mass organisation.

9 The new system of election to be so devised as to transform the primary Congress Committees into electoral colleges. For this purpose, delegates to the annual sessions of the Congress may have to be elected indirectly.

10 The A. I. C. C. shall be composed of not more than 250 to 300 members to be elected by the delegates assembled in the annual session.

11. The A. I. C. C. shall meet periodically, not less than four times in the year. To guarantee the largest attendance, the travelling expenses of the members shall be defrayed by the central organisation. In the case of the annual session of the Congress, the fare shall be paid by the respective provincial organisations, while free boarding and lodging shall be provided by the Reception Committee. There shall be no delegate's fees.

12 The Working Committee shall be elected by the A. I. C. C. in its first meeting to be held immediately upon the conclusion of the annual session of the Congress. The President shall have the privilege of recommendation. The Working Committee shall meet regularly once a month.

18 The day to-day activities of the Congress shall be guided by a Secretariat of five members. In addition to the General Secretary there shall be secretaries in

charge of organisation, agitation and propàganda, parliamentary activities, and the relation with workers' and peasants' movements. All the secretaries shall be members of the Working Committee. The Secretariat will be in permanent session. The secretaries shall be paid.

14. The first item on the agenda of an annual session of the Congress shall be the report of the Executive in which an account of the past year's activities (political as well as organisational), and the defence of these whenever necessary, will be accompanied by an exhaustive review of the political situation of the moment, indication of possible developments, and a proposed line of action to be pursued in the ensuing year. After a free and full discussion by the delegates, the suggested line will be amended, rejected or accepted by a majority vote. This method will guarantee the rank and file control of policy and collective nature of leadership, both so very essential for a democratic movement. Severe criticism or condemnation by a majority, of the report of the past year's activities, will mean a vote of no-confidence in those responsible for them. The report will be made by the General Secretary. It will be prepared previously by the Working Committee, and approved by the A. I. C. C. in its last meeting on the eve of the annual session of the Congress.

15. All draft resolutions for the annual session of

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the Congress shall be prepared at least two months ahead. They shall be circulated to all the primary committees for discussion in membership meetings. Local, district and provincial conferences throughout the country shall take place during those two months, so that opinion of the entire organisation on the resolutions will be definitely crystallised before they will come up for discussion at the annual session.

16 At the opening session of the Congress a number of committees shall be set up, the draft resolutions shall be referred to them for careful scrutiny. The Subjects Committee shall be abolished. The plenary session will later discuss the resolutions in the light of the report submitted by the committees, and amend, accept or reject them by a majority vote. The Working Committee as well as any group of ten delegates shall have the right of moving emergency resolutions.

### Political Prisoners

This Congress demands immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners sentenced or detained without trial.

The Congressmen in office in the seven provinces are hereby directed to notify the respective Governors that failure to enforce this pressing demand of their constituents will compel them to resign.

All the primary committees of the Congress are hereby directed to organise a campaign to support the

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Congress Ministers in the action they shall have to take in pursuance of this resolution.

### On Federation

The resolution recommended by the Working Committee is to be amended as follows ;—

This Congress demands that the States representatives on the Federal Legislative Assembly should be democratically elected by the States people. Otherwise, the Congress will not participate in the elections. As the provincial Legislatures may elect representatives to the Federal Assembly even if the Congress Party refuses to participate in the election, for implementing the resolution of preventing the imposition of the Federal Scheme, Congress Ministers in the provinces shall have to resign with the object of forcing the dissolution of provincial Legislatures. If necessary, the resignations shall be tendered on the issue of the democratic representation of the States in the Federal Legislature.

### Congress and the States

The resolution recommended by the Working Committee is to be amended as follows :—

The ideal of complete independence as defined by the Faizpur Congress and the declaration of principles contained in this resolution commit the Congress to the abolition of the States. They will become integral parts of the Indian Republic with the same rights and

obligations as in the case of the other parts of the country. Meanwhile the Congress demands the establishment of responsible government in the States, and will enforce this demand by leading the States people in their struggle against autocratic rule of the princes. The political activity of the States people shall be considered as an integral part of the Congress activities. Congress members shall be enrolled, and Congress Committees established in the States. The repression of Congress Committees and persecution of Congress members in the States shall be resisted by the entire strength of the All India National Congress. While insisting upon the right to extend its activities in the States, the Congress shall give fullest support to all other organisations of the States people fighting for civil liberties and responsible government, and advises those organisations to demand the establishment of Congress Committees with unrestricted freedom of operation in the States.

## APPENDIX II

### **FOLLOWING IS THE SUBSTANCE OF M. N. ROY'S SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE BENGAL PROVINCIAL POLITICAL CONFERENCE HELD AT BISHNUPUR ON THE 29th AND 30th JANUARY 1938.**

There are three important problems before the Conference. They are not problems peculiar to Bengal. They concern all the provinces. They will come up before the All India Congress, and must be solved in such a way as to bring us nearer to our goal. One is regarding our attitude towards the Federation, and in that connection there rises the problem of the Constituent Assembly. The second problem is that of mass contact. This problem was placed before the country already at the Lucknow Congress. Various opinions have been expressed about the best method of establishing mass contact. In the meantime, experience of actual work in that respect has given concrete shape to the problem. In our country, mass contact means contact with the peasant mass. The relation between the Congress and Kisan Sabhas has become the burning issue. The problem must be boldly tackled. The third

question is one which concerns Bengal more particularly. It is the problem of the detenus and the political prisoners. There are many other questions, not of minor importance, but I shall not deal with all of them.

## How to Fight the Federation

The resolution about Federation that has been placed before you is nothing more than a repetition of the resolution passed by the A. I. O. C. in Calcutta. The time is gone when we could be satisfied with only passing resolutions. To-day we must also have a plan of action, we must know how any particular resolution is to be enforced. The resolution is alright as far as it goes. It need not be amended. But it should be accompanied with a plan of action. That is not yet there, and in the absence of that, the resolution loses all force. I hope that, while calling upon the country to fight the Federation, the Congress will devise a concrete method of doing so effectively. No use calling upon an army to fight, unless every unit of the army knows its respective role and what exactly it has to do.

The amendment does not satisfy the need. It simply paraphrases the resolution. It does not indicate any plan of action. We hear much about it, and we have already had different kinds of it. The vague idea of direct action is not excluded from the resolution itself. Any fight may involve direct action. What is necessary is to define the kind and form of direct action.

to be organised. It must be such as *can* be organised under the given conditions. This is the most important point. We must be clear about what we can do, and resolve and go and do it.

## Representation to the States People

In the A I C. C. meeting, a proposition was made that a country-wide agitation should be organised with the demand for the democratic election of the States representatives to the Federal Assembly. The proposition failed to find any considerable support. Its significance was not appreciated, not even by the advocates of direct action, who preferred to indulge in vague generalities, obviously to catch the votes of the gullible. But we live and learn. The opposition has grown wiser. The idea that failed to secure support in the A. I. C. C. meeting, has been incorporated in the amendment moved in this Conference. That is an encouraging sign. But the amendment is still very vague. While suggesting the idea of an agitation demanding democratic representation of the States peoples, it fails to give the perspective of the development of that agitation, it does not say how the demand will be ultimately enforced, how the agitation will culminate. The attitude of the Congress regarding the States people is not sufficiently clear. But on the other hand, I have no patience with the States people constantly complaining that the Congress does not support their struggle more effectively.



The Congress has not got the power to do so. It can only express its sympathy, and that it has done time and again. But it is not a question of sympathy. The States people must conduct their struggle themselves; then only the Congress sympathy can assume concrete form.

### Way to Wreck the Federation

The relation of the States people with the Congress assumes an entirely different form in connection with the fight against the Federation. We have resolved to combat the Federation. We must find the most effective way of fighting it. The States people are as much concerned with the question of the Federation as the rest of India. Therefore, we must see how we can mobilise the States people in our common struggle against the Federation. We can do that very simply; the States will be represented in the Federal Assembly by people nominated by the rulers of the States. That is against the elementary principles of democracy. The Congress is pledged to democracy. Therefore, the Congress is fully justified to demand that, unless States representatives are elected by the States peoples, the Congress itself will not participate in the election to the Federal Assembly. The experience in the case of Provincial Autonomy has proved that we cannot wreck the Constitution by propaganda only. With all our resolutions for wrecking the Constitution, we are working it to day. We must act in order to wreck it.

We must find out the weakest spot in the enemy's citadel and attack there. Otherwise, we shall not combat the Federation any more successfully than we have done with the provincial part of the Constitution.

If the Congress demand for democratic representation of the States people is not accepted and the Congress does not participate in the Federal elections, the British Government will be in a difficult situation. To pack the Federal Assembly with the nominees of the feudal chiefs, is an indispensable condition for the existence of British Imperialism in India. Therefore, if we concentrate all our energy on the demand for democratic representation of the States people, we may find in it an effective way of combatting the Federal Scheme

### Opposition in the Provinces

Another way to fight the Federation is to begin by wrecking its foundation, that is, the Provincial Legislatures. If we stand loyally by our resolution to wreck the Constitution, there can be no objection to taking that course. So, if we seriously want to wreck the Constitution, dissolution of the provincial Legislatures must be forced on the issue of the democratic representation of the States peoples. We have accepted offices with the declared intention of wrecking the Constitution. The Congress as the majority party holds the key position. If the majority in the Provincial Legislatures in seven provinces does not participate in the election to the

Federal Assembly, the Federation is wrecked. But that will not be done by simple boycott. As long as the Provincial Assemblies remain in formal legal existence, nothing can prevent the Federal Assembly from being elected and thus elected undemocratically, from functioning "constitutionally"

### Resignations of Congress Ministers

The provincial Assemblies must be dissolved. That can be forced by the resignations of the Congressmen in office. The resignations should take place as the practical demonstration of the Congress refusal to participate in the election if the demand regarding the democratic representation of the States is not accepted. The acceptance of the demand will mean amendment of the Constitution. That would place us in a better strategic position. Democratically elected, the Federal Assembly will also be captured by the Congress, and we shall be in the position to precipitate a constitutional crisis in the centre as well as the provinces at any time chosen by us with the object of inaugurating the final struggle for the seizure of power by the people. Meanwhile resignations of the Governments in seven provinces will effectively prevent the introduction of the Federation. On the resignations of the Congress Governments, there will be new elections. The process shall be repeated recurrently. There will be no possibility of a stable Government in the provinces. In every successive election

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the Congress majority will grow. The masses will become politically conscious and educated in an increasing measure in the course of this fight for greater and greater power.

### **Wrecking on all Fronts**

In one word, to wreck the Provincial part of the Constitution is the only way to prevent the imposition of the sinister Federal Scheme. The foundation must be blasted if we really want to obstruct the erection of the superstructure. The resolution to prevent the imposition of the Federal Scheme is incompatible with the present policy of working the provincial Constitution all but in name. We accepted offices in the provinces expressly with the object of combatting the Constitution. Let us remember that. Let us not forget the original resolve of wrecking the unwanted Constitution. Let us carry out that resolution and the Federation will be automatically prevented. No useful purpose will be served by passing a new resolution while shirking the responsibility of acting according to a previous resolution. The country needs a plan of action. I have suggested one for your consideration. I hope you will approve of it, and the Bengal delegation will press the All-India Congress to endorse it.

### **Constituent Assembly**

Now a few words regarding the Constituent Assembly. On this point also, you are simply going to repeat a new

a resolution of the Congress That will not be of much use. The resolution is there. The slogan is there. But we have not yet a plan of action for enforcing it. The urgently needed plan has not yet been framed, because there is no clear perspective, because we are not yet clear about the nature of our demand. When we make a demand, we must know how to enforce it. When we set an ideal before us, we must know how to realise it. The problem of the Constituent Assembly is linked up with the resolution of fighting the Government of India Act. The Constituent Assembly will rise out of the struggle against the effort of Imperialism to reinforce its domination by imposing upon our country an unwanted Constitution. When we put forth the demand of the Constituent Assembly, we claim the democratic right of self-determination, and that right implies the sacred right of revolt.

### How will it Rise ?

We say that only a Constituent Assembly elected by the people of India can have the right to frame the Constitution of the Government of our country. This declaration immediately confronts us with the practical question—How is the Constituent Assembly to rise ? The slogan of Constituent Assembly represents a challenge to the self-assumed sovereignty of the British Parliament. The revolutionary significance of this slogan is not realised by many of us. There are those who seem

to think that we are asking the British Government to convene the Constituent Assembly. That is an illusion. Our demand is not for a larger Round Table Conference, which will meet in India instead of in England. The British Government will never accept the demand for the Constituent Assembly, because it shall appear as the sole custodian of the sovereignty of the Indian people. Therefore, it will rise in the teeth of the imperialist opposition and triumph by breaking it down with the sanction of popular power. This being the case, we cannot simply make up our mind one day to call the Constituent Assembly and have it. The British Government is there with all the power of repression at its command. The Constituent Assembly cannot rise unless there is a sufficiently powerful sanction behind the demand for it.

### **Organ for the Capture of Power.**

We shall have to begin with <sup>the</sup> creation of constituencies, which will eventually elect the Assembly as the organ of popular power. Before proceeding to say how that shall be done, I must make one point clear. To-day the demand for the Constituent Assembly has secured general support. Yet, there prevails much confusion even among those who claim to be the most advanced section of our struggle for freedom. In the past, they were opposed to the idea of the Constituent Assembly. Having fought the idea for eight years as counter-revolutionary, they have become converts to it.

only to deprive it of its revolutionary significance. They believe that the Constituent Assembly will be called only after the capture of political power. They seem to confuse the Constituent Assembly with the legislative organ of the State of free India. The latter can come into existence only when the State is established upon the capture of power by the people. The Constituent Assembly will rise as the organ for the capture, as the signal for the struggle for the capture of power and therefore must precede the act of capturing power. The historical function of the Constituent Assembly will be to lay down the foundation of the new State. It will be the creation of the people of India in its fight for freedom. It will meet only once, for one particular purpose, namely, to lay down the fundamental law of the new State of free India. It will be the instrument through which the people will capture power. Those who maintain that the Constituent Assembly can be called only after the capture of power, evade the all important problem of the capture of power. Even if we permit the confusion of the Constituent Assembly with the future Parliament of India, their still remains the problem of the capture of power. There is no use of planning what will happen after the capture of power, when the problem of the capture of power has still to be solved.

## State within a State

The proper appreciation of this vital problem compels us to realise the supreme importance of the Congress organization, and specially of the primary Congress Committees. The demand that the Congress must be the only political organisation of our country is not a matter of Congress patriotism. It is a matter of necessity. For the purpose of capturing political power, the people of India must have a suitable instrument. A condition for the seizure of power by the people of India is the creation, within the established State, of an organisation which is competent to take over the State power. The Congress organisation is the framework of such a State within the established State. It has been created by the people in their struggle for freedom. We shall be able to enforce our demand for the Constituent Assembly only when it will be possible to transform the Congress into that sovereign body destined to lay down the foundation of the Government of free India. That will happen only when the Congress will be fully representative of the oppressed and exploited masses, and its constituent units will be effectively under their control. Once the Congress is thus democratised, it will have behind it the sanction necessary to assume the function of the Constituent Assembly. Then the demand for Constituent Assembly will cease to be a slogan for propaganda and will become the signal for a decisive action.



At that juncture, the demand must be given a new formulation. *All power to the primary Congress Committees!* These will instantaneously become the units of a new State which will replace the established imperialist state.

## Congress The Instrument

This perspective, opened before us by the demand for the Constituent Assembly, throws light on the supreme importance of the primary Congress Committees. The urgent task of the moment is to democratise and activate them. That is the only way of strengthening the Congress as an organisation. Once we realise that the Congress organisation is the instrument created by the people for the capture of power, we must do everything to make it as effective as possible. Everything that might weaken it must be condemned. On the contrary, everything that serves the purpose of activating and democratising the primary Congress Committees, must be encouraged and regarded as of revolutionary significance.

## Role of the Congress Committees

The result of the acceptance of office by Congressmen in seven provinces should be appraised from this point of view. The atmosphere created by the acceptance of office is very conducive to constructive organisational activities which will create the conditions necessary for the final struggle for the capture of power. Personally,

I am not concerned with whatever may have been the purpose of the Working Committee in recommending the acceptance of office. Nor am I very much perturbed by what the Congress Ministers do or not do in their respective provinces. The resolution of the Working Committee recommending the acceptance of office is there to guide the activities of all Congressmen. I do not know whether our leaders wish to stand by the letter of that resolution or not. But I know what is happening in the country, as a result of the acceptance of office. In the villages, to-day, we see the peasants look upon the Congress Committees as the units of a new Government which they consider to be their own, in which they have confidence. To-day they come to the Congress Committees with all their troubles, grievances and petitions. The local organs and officials of the established State are utterly out of the picture. If the local Congress Committees can take advantage of this psychological atmosphere, before long they will be firmly entrenched behind the will and confidence of the masses. But the local Congress workers must be careful not to encourage false hopes. While endorsing the demands of the masses and doing everything possible under the given circumstances to redress their grievances, it should be made clear to them that the Congress has not got the power for promoting the welfare of the people. It should be also made clear to them that the Congress is their own creation.

and it can be strengthened with their support. Activities on these lines will draw the masses closer organisationally to the Congress and transform the local Congress Committees into democratically elected and controlled bodies competent to become the units of a new State. In course of time, the situation will be created in which the slogan "All power to the local Congress Committees" will have to be given as the signal for the election of the Constituent Assembly. That is the only way to the capture of power.

### Mass Contact

The problem of mass contact will have to be solved before that fateful situation can be created. I shall not deal with all aspects of the problem. I shall say a few words only on the relation between the Congress and the workers' and peasants' organisations. As a matter of fact, the relation between the Congress and the peasantry is the crux of the problem of mass contact.

### Workers and Congress

Under the given conditions of our country the industrial working class is a negligible factor. They represent a minute minority of the population. If, for some reason or other, they stay out of the anti-imperialist struggle, this will not be very much weakened. Therefore, the Congress may not be much concerned with the attitude of the industrial workers.

## Peasants and Congress

But it is different with the peasantry. In our country to-day, no political movement can succeed without the support of the peasantry. The vital problem before the Congress, therefore, is not only to have contact with the peasantry, but how to organise that contact with the object of transforming the rural Congress Committees into peasant committees. The situation has been complicated by the organisation of Kisan Sabhas. The entire responsibility for the strained relation between the Congress and the Kisan Sabhas is laid at the door of the leaders of the latter. That is a one-sided view of the situation. The present unhappy situation has been brought about by the failure on the part of the Congress organisations to act according to the resolutions of the Congress on the agrarian question. Had those resolutions been acted upon, there would 'be no room for separate peasants' organisations which are inevitably developing anti-Congress tendencies. The Kisan Sabha program as such is perfectly acceptable to the Congress. Indeed, the Congress program contains all the demands of the Kisan Sabhas. Let the Congress act according to its own program, and the problem of the relation between the Congress and the Kisan' Sabhas will be solved. As regards the organisers of the Kisan Sabhas, they are mistaken to think that their activities will ever strengthen the Congress or do any good to the peasants them-

selves. Independent Kisan Sabhas cannot be organised without weakening the Congress. And if the Congress is weakened, the vital task of the capture of power by the people will never be achieved.

### Futility of Kisan Sabhas.

We hear much about the independent class organisations of workers and peasants. The idea of an independent class organisation of industrial workers has some sense. But I fail to understand what is an independent class organisation of the peasantry. The peasantry is not an independent class, nor is it a homogeneous social unit. Then what are the Kisan Sabhas to be independent of? Nobody has ever suggested that the peasants should be organised together with the landlords and the capitalists in one economic organisation. The relation is with the Congress. The question is whether the Kisan Sabhas shall be independent of the Congress or not. Independent of the Congress, the Kisan Sabhas must necessarily be hostile to it. Otherwise, they cannot be independent. The Congress itself is mainly a peasant organisation. We can defend the existence of independent Kisan Sabhas only on the ground that the Congress cannot defend the interests of the peasantry, and if we start Kisan Sabhas on that ground these will not only be independent, but hostile to the Congress. I fail to see how the formation of independent Kisan organisations can contribute to the strength of the Congress. If the

Congress really does not stand for the welfare of the peasantry, then it can never acquire the power necessary for enforcing the demand of complete national freedom. In that case, it is useless to talk about strengthening the Congress. But the fact is that the Congress commands the confidence of the peasantry

### Counter-Revolutionary Tactics

Since the overwhelming majority of our population are peasants, the Congress as a mass organisation must be mainly a peasant organisation. The social foundation of the movement for political freedom is the revolt of the peasantry against the established economic relations. In order to fulfill its role, the Congress must be the instrument of agrarian revolution. Under the given conditions of our country, the interest of the peasantry is identical with the interest of the entire nation. National progress and prosperity is conditional upon the liberation of the peasantry from the present economic bankruptcy. Its political program has set before the Congress the task of securing the support of the peasantry. Therefore, all activities for promoting the welfare of the peasantry are permissible inside the Congress organisation. Consequently, there is no ground for any conflict between the Congressmen and leaders of the peasantry. The relation will be normalised through the activation of the rural Congress Committees, which, in order to develop into units of the new State, must be transformed into

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peasant committees That will not be done if the peasants are organised separately, independent of the Congress Therefore, any propaganda or organisational activities which will persuade the peasants to leave or stay out of the Congress must be characterised as counter revolutionary

